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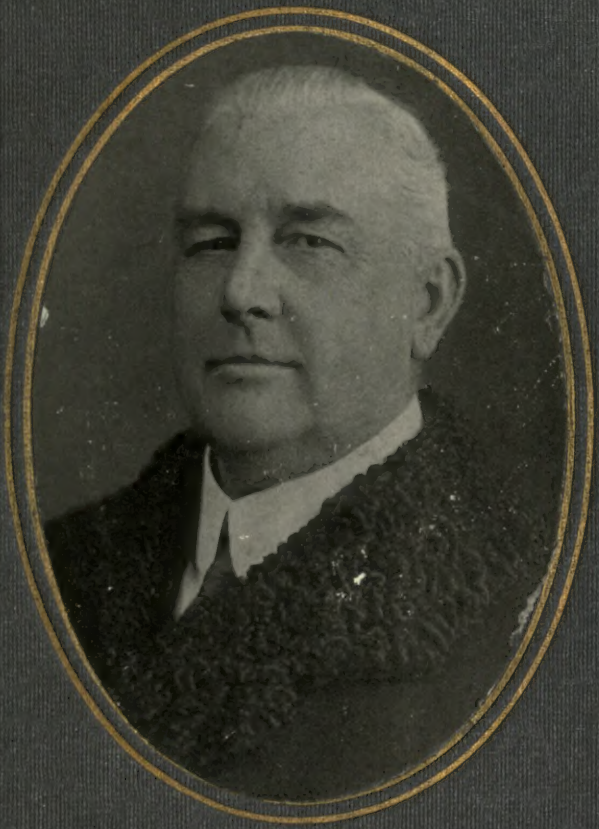

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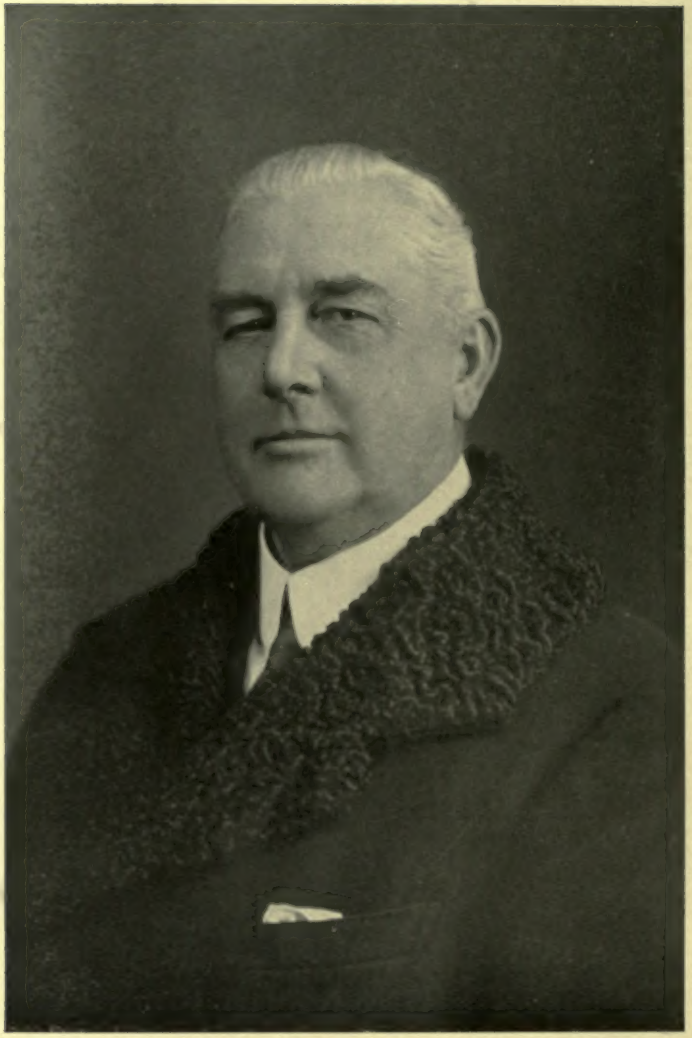

RUTLAND BARRINGTON

More Rutland Barrington

By

Himself

Illustrated

London

Grant Richards Ltd.

1911

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Preface

It appears to be the custom for all writers of such nondescript matter as "recollections" and "reminiscences" of a personal character to apologise to the public for inflicting on it a volume which it is quite within the bounds of possibility may have been anticipated with a certain amount of eagerness and received with the same ratio of pleasure.

If this apology is imperative in the case of a "first offence," what the mode of procedure in the event of a second production may be I have no opportunity of knowing, this being the first time I have projected a second volume; possibly it may take the form of a modest allusion to the necessity for the second volume being pointed out by the publisher as a natural sequence to the reception of the first.

Be this as it may, however, in offering my second venture to the attention of a discriminating public, I fail to see the need of any apology, and this for several reasons; firstly, that (with the exceptions of myself and the publisher's reader) no one is obliged to read the book; secondly, that the congratulatory, and therefore marvellously correct, treatment the first volume received at the hands of my friends the reviewers is a distinct invitation to afford them another opportunity of demonstrating their unswerv-

ing attitude of kindliness; and thirdly because, while I have met many friends and acquaintances who were good enough to express the pleasure afforded them by my first volume, I have met a far more numerous contingent of both who were quite unaware that I had "done a book" at all!

This last reason appears to me to contain, as they say a woman's postscript so often does, the gist of the whole matter, and therefore might well have been written first, but I will let the others stand, and content myself with pointing out as my "lastly" the very obvious conclusion that the issuing of a second volume will call a renewed attention to the first, a point which, in the properly balanced authorial mind, bears no commercial significance whatever, being simply the outcome of a desire that no one should miss what they might find enjoyable.

During an interval at one of the strenuous rehearsals of *The Girl in the Train* I was chatting with an old friend and well-known playwright, and the talk turned on the subject of my book, which he was kind enough to say he had read with great pleasure—*but* (it is nearly always present, that "but," I find) he hardly thought it wise for an actor to "reminisce" unless he were on the point of retiring or, better still, had done so, and when I confessed my intention of starting a second volume he firmly declared that I had no right to do that "unless I was dead"!

This is a line of reasoning that I find myself quite unable to follow, and having been guilty of the first

offence, and not, as yet, feeling even moribund, it is my grim determination to commit the second. I have seen and done so much since writing the word "Finis" to my first book (now I come to think of it I do not believe it is there) that I am inspired to hope that some at least of my many experiences may be found of passing interest to those fortunate enough to read them.

With this hope looming large I then venture upon my second attempt to amuse without instructing, and if I should achieve but a modicum of success in the former motive it will more than counterbalance the distress I shall feel if my efforts were, quite unintentionally, to stray in the direction of the latter!

THE AUTHOR.

The author is indebted to Messrs Maull & Fox, Messrs Ellis & Walery, Messrs Bulix & Son, The Dover Street Studios, and Messrs Foulsham & Banfield for their kindness in permitting the reproduction of some of the photographs in the book.

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CHAPTER I

MORE SAVOY REVIVALS—"MIKADO"—"PINAFORE"

A VERY memorable night to me was the 28th April 1908, when Mrs D'Oyly Carte initiated a further series of Savoy revivals, commencing with the evergreen and ever-popular *Mikado*, followed at certain intervals by *Pinafore*, *Iolanthe*, *Pirates of Penzance*, *Gondoliers* and *Yeomen of the Guard*.

The idea on this occasion was to form a repertory very much on the lines of the enormously successful touring company which has been a household word in the provinces since the seventies, and which maintains its popularity and "drawing" power to the present day.

Whether this lengthy association with one form of art makes for the progress of the individual in his or her profession is a question which I do not remember to have seen argued, but my personal opinion on the matter is, that it is unavoidable that the talent of the artist must become cramped and, to some extent, mechanical. An odd confirmation of this, although, perhaps, hardly coming under the category of "mechanical art," recurs to me in connection with the original performances of *Sorcerer* and *Pinafore*. I had evolved a species of attitude of the legs which seemed to me to lend clerical character to the Vicar,

and the habit remained with me during the earlier part of the run of *Pinafore*, thus perhaps giving the suggestion of a clerical captain in the navy; at any-rate it struck one of the eminent critics of the day, who took me severely to task on the matter.

My views, however, have received confirmation in more than one quarter, of which, perhaps, the most striking was the admission once made to me by a long-standing member of the D'Oyly Carte Touring Company that he has, on occasions, when arriving at the theatre, found himself quite unable to remember a word of the part he was expected to play, and so quietly returned to his rooms, leaving his task to an understudy, who may possibly have suffered from the same momentary forgetfulness, for the reason that he had not been called upon for a long period. Whatever may be the truth of the matter, my own experience is that a prolonged playing of one particular *rôle* induces a sufficiently mechanical performance to allow of the consideration, during an act, of any exciting incident of the past few hours, occasionally, indeed, becoming so absorbing as to bring about the horrible experience of not knowing what the next line is!

I have myself, on occasions, replayed in memory certain triumphant or disastrous holes on the golf links, and once in particular the reflection of a faulty brassy shot that had cost me the match, together with a certain amount of what golfers describe as "London money," produced a feeling of annoyance and irritation so diametrically opposed to the benevo-

lent scene I was depicting as to very nearly result in disaster.

Obviously this danger is considerably lessened when playing five or six different operas a week, as the attention must be concentrated on the work in hand in such a case; but curious results may even then occur should an artist have played more than one of the parts in the same opera; more especially, of course, when the different characters played have met in the same scenes. This was amusingly illustrated one night, during the last revival of *Mikado*, by Henry Lytton, who had times out of number played Koko and was then playing the Mikado; Workman was taken seriously ill, and Mrs Carte requested Lytton, as a personal favour to her, to take up the part of Koko for a few nights, which he naturally did, and, to the great delight of the Pish Tush and Pooh Bah, spoke one of the Mikado's lines to Koko, and answered it as Koko in due course. The hilarity caused by such a trifling slip—and whatever the theatre or play it is always the same—is chiefly due, I fancy, to the obligation not to laugh when on duty, a form of self-restraint which is most difficult to practise, as I believe anyone will admit who has suffered the like provocation in church.

H.M.S. Pinafore was once more put into commission on 25th July, and started on a pleasant little cruise extending to January of the following year—with occasional spells in harbour, when the officers and crew were granted short leave to enable them to appear in other operas. Lytton gave us another proof of his

versatility by playing the deformed Dick Deadeye in a manner which I have never seen excelled by any exponent of the part; he put into it a pathetic touch which gave an added value to several of the situations. He also very kindly deputised for Workman in this play, but his reading of Sir Joseph was too full of a delightful upstart dignity to allow of any amusing little contretemps such as he furnished us with in *Mikado*. Sir William expressed great dissatisfaction at the dress-rehearsal with the costumes of the ladies of the chorus, which were certainly not made by Paquin, but were, or so I ventured to think, adequate if not imposing. The lavish manner in which money was spent on all the original productions of these operas cannot well be maintained when it is a question of revivals for short runs, though it is easy to understand that this line of argument scarcely appeals to an author, whoever he may be, whose natural desire is to see his play have the best possible exploitation.

I ventured to advance this theory to Gilbert later on, when he was suggesting the possibility of a syndicate being formed to revive certain of the operas on the original basis of unstinted production, giving it as my opinion that it would not prove a commercial success, but he was firmly convinced that my judgment was in error, did not hesitate to say so—naturally—and left me quite convinced that I was right. With the exception of such a hardy annual as *Peter Pan*, I fancy no revival of anything would be a commercial success were more than about half the original cost of production spent upon it, a

fact which no one is better qualified to speak to than Mrs Carte, who could also doubtless produce figures to prove the argument.

Also, in the matter of criticising costumes the appointment of a judge would be a difficult matter, for at a later revival Gilbert expressed his entire approval of some dresses which I overheard a lady present describe as "worse than *Pinafore*!"

I had great doubts as to my figure being slim enough to admit of my wearing the dinner-dress in Act 2, which includes a white waistcoat; however, adherence to tradition being one of my characteristics, I ran the risk of being told I was growing portly and donned the regulation vest. Naturally I was told so, told by the press and the photographers—the latter being possibly the more convincing, for a very obvious reason; indeed I felt impelled, by consideration for my personal feelings, to "condemn" one proof, that of a group of myself and waistcoat taken in profile! However a neighbour of mine brought me great consolation as the outcome of a visit paid to the theatre in company with an old lady who had seen all the original productions. On my appearance she remarked: "That's not the old original Rutland Barrington?" My friend being very much interested in the play and, as he put it, not wanting an argument, answered: "No, it's his son." To which his old lady with a smile of triumph replied: "I knew it!" Someone was wrong somewhere, as I find one critic remarking that—" his increasing years certainly add dignity to a dignified *rôle*, but have one disadvantage:

by no possible means can one imagine him to be the foster-brother of the youthful Rackstraw." At first sight this appears to be sound reasoning, but the writer seems to overlook the fact that in the original production, when I was young enough to be the foster-brother of George Power (the then Rackstraw), I was even then sufficiently old to own a daughter of marriageable age! After all, what has age or any such trifling inaccuracy to do with Gilbert if he chooses to ignore the existence of such a thing.

The frequenters of the pit and gallery at the Savoy have an intimate acquaintance with the words and music of all these operas, which is strongly in evidence on the different *premières*, with very happy results, all the concerted numbers being given during the time of waiting for the commencement of the play—with the sole exception of those contained in the opera about to be presented. This is a very striking proof of loyalty to Sullivan, and always appears to be appreciated by the rest of the audience, but these same enthusiasts have been the cause of not a little trouble and friction owing to their desire and determination to have all their favourite numbers repeated at least once.

Many patrons of the stalls and boxes do not ardently desire to hear the same opera practically twice in one evening—the result being that about this period Mrs Carte was inundated with remonstrances from them at the frequency with which encores were taken, these remonstrances being the evident sequel of some rather stormy scenes between the occupants of stalls

and balconies and pit and gallery, each demonstrating that they intended to have things their way.

These scenes, which at first were conducted with a certain amount of good humour on both sides, eventually developed a feeling of rancour which became so pronounced that it was felt imperative that something must be done.

Mrs Carte, whose constant endeavour it is to satisfy all her patrons in every possible way, and whose consideration for her artists is too well known to need referring to, having carefully thought over the matter, issued an edict that no encores beyond those decided upon by herself were to be taken under any circumstances, tradition being once again employed as the method of selection, and its value as applied to art (in the shape of encores at least) being once more shown to be an "unknown quantity," for such a decree was obviously more easy to pronounce than to enforce, and one evening, shortly afterwards, a certain encore was conceded after a quite lengthy stoppage of the play, Cellier being on the horns of a dilemma between the insistent demand of an audience which for once appeared unanimous in desire, and the very definite instructions he had received from his employer. This was no enviable situation for one with the inbred awe of "the management" which seems to have impregnated all who served under its banner, from time immemorial (tradition again), and his misgivings were realised, for, forced to concede the encore, he was promptly carpeted for not riding to orders.

With Mrs Carte's invariable sweetness of temper, consideration and keen sense of justice the "carpeting" partook more of the nature of a friendly council of war, at which she proposed to take the onus entirely on her own shoulders, and, with this intention, seriously contemplated announcing, through the medium of the Press, the stern decree that for the future there would be *no* encores at the Savoy.

She relinquished this idea on consideration, however, and the trouble righted itself in some way of its own without any further discussion, possibly the encorists became less demonstrative, or the artists less deserving.

Tradition was of course responsible for the whole affair, the entire Gilbert and Sullivan *ménage*—if one may use the word in this connection—from author, through manager, down to call-boy, being convinced that encores obtained in 1878 should be rigidly enforced in 1908, and any secured outside the recognised sequence to be regarded almost as a breach of confidence on the part of the artist—and, as such, to be dealt with in a peremptory manner.

Oddly enough, a striking illustration of the misapprehension on the part of a member of the audience as to the person responsible for taking an encore was furnished for me immediately after I had written the foregoing paragraph, in this way. I had just been reading the criticisms of *The Girl in the Train*, and amongst others I found Mr Westminster Gazette saying, with reference to a quintette and dance in which I was concerned—"which made one of the

hits of the evening—largely, it may be added, in consequence of the efforts of Mr Barrington himself. The house was especially tickled when, seeing how well it had gone, Mr Barrington, entirely ignoring the conductor, insisted on repeating it."

Evidently Mr Westminster Gazette entirely failed to notice that, during the applause following the first performance of the number, the conductor performed the usual ceremony of tapping the desk, as a signal that we might do it again. I would not for any consideration take on my shoulders the onus of accepting an encore for four *confrères*, including Phyllis Dare and Huntley Wright, each of whom had worked quite as hard as I had done in the number in question, and each of whom has as definite a sense of their own privileges in such a manner as I have; the fact of my appearing to accept the compliment on behalf of the quintette arising solely from the necessity of my being left alone on the stage at the conclusion of the dance.

CHAPTER II

THE ENCORE: ITS USE AND ABUSE—OVERWHELMING ORCHESTRAS

THE subject of "encores" in connection with the question of "to be or not to be" has always held a great fascination for me, and I have frequently thought that it might prove amusing, and perhaps illuminating, if a plebiscite could be taken of the wishes, for and against, of theatre and concert goers.

With the subject constantly fermenting, as it were, in my brain it came to me as an agreeable surprise that I should be asked to read a paper on the matter to the members of the O. P. Club in January 1909, and it was with no little gratification that I seized upon the chance of airing my own views on a much-discussed question.

Having a very keen sense of the position held by the members of this old-established and popular circle in relation to music and the drama, I felt it incumbent that I should not go into battle without some survey of the ground, and with that object in view I devoted myself, for a few weeks previous to the occasion, to obtaining some idea of the attitude of the general public towards encores, by means of questioning all and sundry whom I met possessed of

the necessary time, inclination and patience to afford me replies.

The answers I received, had they been rendered in the form of a "show of hands," would have been fairly level, but many of the added remarks were extremely interesting, amongst which was one which impressed me as being a view of the situation which presented itself to few. It was made by a lady, who objected to encores on the ground that they must be an unfair tax on the artist. This opinion I believe to be shared by the profession at large, although I fancy that the most hardened cynic would admit that it is a tax which is greeted with a resignation indicating great nobility of character, scarcely exceeding that with which certain other descriptions of taxes are met.

It is perfectly obvious that we have, at least partially, reconstructed the meaning of "encore," in the case of singers we most certainly have, for whereas it formerly meant "sing it again," the modern definition of the compliment is usually "sing something else," and, with a special reservation in the case of some songs, "the same tune if you like, but other words." This perversion of an antique meaning may perhaps have come about through the prolific tendencies of modern lyricists, who have more to say than they can possibly put into two or three verses, and wish their hearers to suppose that the verses increase in interest in the same ratio as they do in number. This explanation has forced itself on my attention on many occasions when, as a member of the audience, I have found the demand for an

encore so insistent as to leave the public no option in the matter.

There is little doubt that many artists, while detesting encores, at the same time feel a keen sense of disappointment if they are not forthcoming; this apparent paradox may in many cases be explained by the fact that so many managers measure the success of a song or number by its encore-securing qualities, this test of discrimination has even, within my experience, led to the suppression or elimination of items of a tender or emotional character which could only be received with an appreciative silence which is sometimes accompanied by that little sigh of pleasure which is infinitely more grateful to the true artist than would be a noisy demonstration of approval.

We do not less enjoy, or are less impressed by, the Hallelujah Chorus because of the customary silence which ensues, though this is perhaps hardly a fair example to quote, all oratorios being received in the same manner.

That a genuine encore is a genuine compliment I presume few would question, but to determine the proportion of credit due to the earner of the reward is a somewhat difficult proposition. The author of the lyric, the composer and the artist who renders the song have each a claim, and possibly the last-named of the triumvirate could offer an immediate solution, but it does not follow that it must perforce be the correct one.

Equally obvious is the fact that a genuine encore has all the effect of a powerful stimulant to the artist,

and, happily, none of the resultant depression of an overdose of the real article, and, if for this reason alone, is a very desirable thing, from the point of view of the public, as an incitement to further flights of energy, for their behoof, on the part of the recipient.

There are those who maintain that without encores the public would not consider that it had received its money's worth, but this, on the face of it, is bad reasoning; the audience pays to hear a play once on an evening, and with the ever-present British sense of justice would never dream of demanding more than it was entitled to: to my mind a certain indication that the encore is one of the many charming and spontaneous expressions of pleasure and good will which it delights in showering on its favourites.

I have often heard the question raised: Who is the proper person to accept an encore?—and here again I find great diversity of opinion. In my own humble opinion the responsibility rests, in the case of a solo, entirely with the artist concerned, and, in the case of a concerted number, with the musical director. This opinion was stoutly combated by the director of one theatre in which I was engaged, who claimed the right of decision in all cases, and who, I believe, was scarcely convinced that he was in error even after I had pointed out the fact that it was in the power of the artist, on an encore being accepted on his or her behalf, to which for some reason he or she felt a disinclination to accede, to make a quiet exit and leave the musical director to find a way out of the impasse! I am pleased to record the fact

that the matter was never put to the test by myself in the manner suggested, which I also accept as a tacit admission of the correctness of my view of the solo side of the question.

When we take into consideration the fact that a successful play involves the giving of at least one matinée per week, at which, in spite of a rather widespread belief to the contrary, the majority of artists concerned are conscientious enough to "put in all they know," as much as at an evening performance, it becomes obvious that the strain is doubled, and does indeed become something of a tax on human resources, to such an extent, in some cases, as to lead to a song being "cut," which is perhaps the reason of the aforesaid belief, but the cavillers do not always reflect that they would sooner have the artist minus a song, than the play minus the artist.

Among the remarks made to me on the subject, by sundry friends whose opinions I requested, was the very pertinent one, a side issue possibly, now frequently expressed: "Why is the orchestra allowed to be so overwhelming?" This led to the opening of a new field of questions on my part, during which I arrived at the conclusion that audience and artists alike share the grievance of the strenuousness of many of the modern orchestral accompaniments, in some cases amounting to a battle, in which the overwhelming odds must end in a defeat of the artist.

The orchestra is afforded its opportunity in overture and entr'actes, and, in accordance with the opinion of artist and audience alike, should, for the remainder

of the time, act as a lifebuoy of support to the singers, and not a foaming wave of melody beneath whose resistless force they must inevitably drown.

I do not for a moment wish it thought that, in writing on this matter, I am accusing any particular musical director, my own theory being that, with few exceptions, they are all addicted to the possibly natural idea that their musicians' contribution to the entertainment is the paramount consideration, and if honestly convinced of this they are but laudably fulfilling their contract—but other people may hold different views, and be equally convinced of their correctness without the opportunity of expressing them.

The musical director is the master of the situation, and in him alone is vested the power to decide whether the artist or the orchestra shall be most in evidence; that it most certainly does not rest with the members of the orchestra themselves was made perfectly clear to me when conversing on the subject with some of my orchestral friends, who informed me that, owing to the propinquity of other instruments, they can only be aware of the strength of tone they are giving by a signal from the director to increase or modify it.

I am bound to admit that, of late, I have noticed at several theatres a greater consideration than obtained formerly in this respect, resulting in a marked increase, at all events in my own case, of the pleasure with which audiences listen to musical plays.

When I ventured on embodying some of these remarks in the paper to which I alluded at the

commencement of this chapter, I was intent on airing a grievance which, I had satisfied myself, was shared by countless patrons of the theatre, not to mention countless artists, and which I hoped might be ventilated without rancour, but the remarks then aroused something in the nature of a storm in a teacup—one journal describing the incident as "an attack on the orchestra," which it most certainly was not, nor was it intended to be, it was simply a plea for the modification of the prominence given to one feature of what is undoubtedly intended to be a harmonious whole, and if I have in any way been instrumental in wounding the feelings, in ever so slight a degree, of my friends the instrumentalists, I here and now beg of them to forgive me as freely I forgive them, which should be an easy task, as I have never succeeded in partially drowning the orchestra, in spite of many gallant efforts in the *piano* passages.

Another journalist immediately "interviewed" my old friend François Cellier on the subject, jumping to an erroneous conclusion that my remarks were levelled at him, and while making merry, in a mild way, at my expense he, very naturally and properly, disclaimed the slightest possibility of blame attaching to himself or his famous Savoy orchestra, but he might not perhaps have been quite so satisfied on the point had he overheard a remark made to me a day or two later by another "late" Savoyard (and a really eminent singer) to this effect—"Oh, Barry—*how* I have suffered sometimes from the loudness of the accompaniments!"

PRESIDENT O. P. CLUB

The best of us are not infallible, but I do not think we have an English conductor with so distorted a view of his duties as a certain well-known German director who was rehearsing his play, and at one point shouted from the stalls: "Lauter! lauter!—I can still hear a voice!"

Whatever the general opinion may be on the subject treated in this chapter I certainly appeared to have the sympathy of the members of the O. P. Club on the evening in question, with the exception, perhaps, of one speaker, in the short debate which followed, and who was good enough to say that, although I had interested and amused him, he did not consider that I had thrown a particularly illuminating light on the matter, a blow to my feeling of self-satisfaction which was softened by the humorous twinkle in his eye and fully restored by the hospitality of my host and old friend, Carl Hentschel, the president of the club, as exhibited in the East Room.

I must confess that since then I have not noticed any appreciable falling off in the encores I secure, nor have I been overwhelmed with evidence of an orchestral desire to profit by a well-intentioned hint.

CHAPTER III

"IOLANTHE"—"PIRATES OF PENZANCE"

I REMEMBER being very strongly impressed with the music of *Iolanthe* at the first band rehearsal for this revival, but at the same time could not rid myself of the feeling that the opera as a whole was far from being one of the strongest of the series.

My own particular share in it being rather unimportant may unconsciously have suggested this idea, Lord Tolloller being practically a kind of leader of the chorus, his only chance of distinction coming with the song in Act 2—"In Good King George's Glorious Days"; his twin part, Mount Ararat, not being very much more prominent, but then he was a tenor, whereas I was a comedian, or so considered myself, and rather wasted on a "walking gentleman" type of part.

My conviction as to its slightness was borne out to the extent of our commencing rehearsals for the *Pirates of Penzance* very shortly after its production.

In my very natural wish to get a little more out of the part than I formerly had, it occurred to me to use a different make-up and manner, so I ventured, "for this occasion only," to suggest to Gilbert that I should represent him as a kind of brainless person with reddish hair—parted in the centre and smoothed

down on either side; this suggestion, being made to Gilbert by letter, brought me one of his characteristic replies to add to my archives, conveying his consent subject to the wig not being "scarlet" and the absence of brain not "too conspicuous." I naturally modified both items—if one may speak of modifying the absence of a thing—and the result undoubtedly contributed a little something of prominence, to judge from one criticism, which alluded to my performance as "richly Barringtonian, possessing all the bouquet of fine old fruity port!"

It was in noticing this opera that another journal alluded to me as "a National Institution," and I am still in doubt whether this referred to myself or the species of invertebrate nobleman I was endeavouring to depict; but both references are distinct compliments, as to be hailed as an institution of a national character must be pleasing to any right-minded Englishman, while the "bouquet" indicated by the former writer can only be ascribed to my subtle sense of delineation, port being a beverage denied me, and also one for which I have no particular desire.

In criticising *Pinafore* a very well-known journalist refers to the "delicious humour of the recitatives," and regrets that in his later operas Sullivan should have "given up this source of innocent merriment." I fancy he must have also had *The Sorcerer* in his mind, that opera certainly containing more examples of this delightful humour on Sullivan's part than *Pinafore*, and really, in view of the laughter invariably excited by these trifling burlesques of the seriousness

of grand opera, the question of their omission is a difficult one to solve. A simple explanation may be that Gilbert discontinued writing lines which could only be dealt with in that manner, but the fact remains they were dispensed with, and with them a form of humour always effective.

Would-be imitators of the two great collaborators have never ventured upon the recitative, as far as my memory serves me, which may have had as much to do with their want of success as the reason put forward by another eminent critic—namely, that "Gilbert and Sullivan seem to have occupied the whole territory of satirical Comic Opera."

I confess to a certain doubt as to the application of the term "satirical" to these operas, with the exception perhaps of *Patience*, which was deliberately aimed at the craze for æstheticism so much in vogue at the time of its production.

There is no doubt that Gilbert and Sullivan set a standard which has proved extremely difficult of attainment by their successors in the form of light entertainment, but I have always felt it a little hard that a comparison of methods and skill when dealing with later aspirants should have been instituted at all. Is it an impossibility to judge an author or composer on his own merits without endeavouring to find traces of an indebtedness to this distinguished couple? Surely not—and yet for many years after the last Gilbert and Sullivan opera was produced there seemed to obtain a "vogue of comparison," as it were, among the critics which must have hampered

the aspirants as much as it annoyed them—in truth this habit has not yet become entirely extinct, especially among the public, who will still speak of a certain piece as being "the nearest they have seen" to Gilbert and Sullivan.

In fairness to these critics it should be admitted that, in many cases, there has been strong evidence of an effort to work on the same lines, but without the brilliant turns and twists of humour in the celebrated prototypes.

There was a great discussion as to whether the allusion to Captain Shaw in the Fairy Queen's song should be allowed to stand, in view of the death of the gallant chief of the fire brigade since the opera was last seen. It was generally felt that to alter it in any way would only make it more noticeable, and it therefore remained as written, but it struck a note of pathos which was quite evident.

I think the Lord Chancellor quite the best performance given by Workman in all the series. The humour of the part was brought out with a somewhat lighter touch than he used in some of his other parts, with conspicuous success in the delightful burlesque of legal arguments with which the part abounds, for it is an undoubted truth that, to properly declaim Gilbert's lines, the comedian must never betray his consciousness of the fact that they are humorous, a trap that even my dear old friend and colleague George Grossmith was not invariably able to avoid.

An admirable foil to this lighter touch was provided by Workman in the pathetic little scene at the

close of Act 2, where Iolanthe appeals to him for her son, in which he was of great assistance to Jessie Rose by his sympathetic attitude in listening, and final encouragement. One journal in referring to his performance in very laudatory terms concludes with the following remark:—"He made even the orchestra laugh; no higher tribute to his genius could be imagined!"

This is a poor compliment, with a sinister double edge to it, for it implies a distinct lack of sense of humour on the part of the orchestra, by the use of the word "even," and, as every artist on the stage well knows, the slightest deviation from the usual order of events or happenings in a play is sufficient to excite the risibility of the estimable people whose monotonous fate it is to have to listen nightly to the same people, making the same remarks, and exploiting the same humorous "business." The same writer felt himself compelled to fall foul of my performance on the occasion, by most sympathetically regretting that "we cannot chronicle an artistic success as well as a personal triumph for Mr Rutland Barrington; he did not fill the part so well as other members of the same company has filled it" (the word "has" is his, not mine), "he cannot now—if he ever could—sing, 'When Britain really ruled the Waves'—and worse—he forgot his part."

I sincerely hope that my allusion to this criticism will not be looked upon as an effort to "get a bit of my own back," for it is not so intended, as I should be among the first to recognise the enormity of the

HENRY LYTTON

AS THE PIRATE KING IN "THE PIRATES OF PENZANCE"

actor sitting in judgment on the critic; it simply arises from a desire to express my regret at having so offended his sense of harmony, and to offer him my hearty congratulations on the evident fact that he did not hear me "sing" that song in the original production, when the effect on his possibly over-sensitive ear might have proved fatal.

Iolanthe was followed by the *Pirates of Penzance*, which met with a better reception, not only from the artistic point of view, but the financial as well. Harry Lytton elaborated the melodramatic side of the character of the Pirate King to an extent that pleased Gilbert immensely at rehearsals, and the audiences even more at nights. He wore what are commonly known as "lifts" inside his jack-boots to give him a little extra height and dignity, and in taking his enormous strides about the stage they imparted to him a kind of flat-footed walk that was most effective and funny, especially in the scene between the King, Ruth and Frederic in Act 2, which I used to watch almost nightly, for the sake of the hearty laughs it gave me. I strongly advised him, when he later on joined the touring company as principal comedian, to alternate the part of the King with the Major General, but I believe it was not found possible.

Many journals alluded to this opera as being in all probability the last of the series, chiefly owing to the fact that Mrs Carte was suffering very much in health, but they reckoned without a full appreciation of her qualtities as a fighter, and, in spite of several

enforced absences of days, and even weeks, she continued to hold the reins of management until the end of March 1909.

About the same time Rumour was busy—and, possibly, presumably owing to the same cause—with the name of Workman as the possible successor in management at the Savoy, with the intention of carrying on the series of revivals. It is now a matter of history that he was the next tenant of the theatre, but that he discarded (if he ever entertained) the idea of exploiting further Gilbert and Sullivan operas in favour of a work by two unknown collaborators, with, I fear, disastrous consequences. It was not my fate to see either *The Mountaineers* or the *Two Merry Monarchs*, both of which operas I heard spoken of as possessing "a certain amount of good material, but requiring pulling together by a master hand," but I did see the intermediate production, which was Gilbert's *Wicked World* transmogrified into an opera.

With pleasant memories of Mr and Mrs Kendal in two of the most important parts at the Haymarket, when it was a comedy, I went to see the opera, fully anticipating a most delightful evening, but I was doomed to disappointment. In the first place, Workmen could not efface my memories of Buckstone, with his oleaginous humour, in the part of the old servitor, and, in addition, I found both ear and eye wearied by the unavoidable lack of men's voices and presence in the songs, concerted numbers and choruses.

The present tendency is, I know, to crowd the

stage with pretty girls in pretty costumes, and keep mere men somewhat in the background, but this particular opera was, to my mind, a distinct intimation that he must be kept so far back as to be totally invisible, and that as he is the natural support of the softer sex in real life, so it is equally important that he should support her (I have my doubts about the grammar of this sentence, but did not presume to speak of the fair sex as "it") in her stage existence.

I was also to a great extent disappointed in the music, which I do not for a moment doubt or dispute was as scholarly as any virtuoso could desire, but as we cannot all be virtuosi I found myself, in common with others of the audience, I believe, longing for that "tuney" something which we felt the composer could give us "an he would." If the truth were known, I fancy he was also hampered by the lack of male voices, for I noticed that there were some of the dainty-looking lady choristers who appeared to be producing notes "from their sandals," and I presumed them to be, rightly or wrongly, the missing tenors and basses.

I wonder what Sullivan would have done in such a case—whether he would have permitted the author to include men in his scheme or perhaps have secured some good-looking beardless youths and disguised them as girls, which might easily be done by decimating the ranks of the O.U.D.C. and Cambridge A.D.C.

It has often occurred to me that a vast increase of enjoyment would accrue to the parents—the male ones certainly—who take their little ones to the

pantomimes if the Prince who invariably woos and wins the heroine were personated by a good-looking youth instead of the doubtless talented and beautiful young women known as "Principal Boys," and the figures of whom, as a rule, offer a very obvious surmise as to their sex.

The origin of this *bouleversement* of nature appears to be lost in the mists of antiquity, but in these days of reform it seems a pity that some enterprising manager does not try the effect of a change, the spectacle of two girls indulging in endearments being entirely opposed to all manly ideas as to the fitness of things, and as unwelcome as the fitness of some of the things worn by its exponents.

CHAPTER IV

A NEW PART—"GONDOLIERS"—A BIRTHDAY

After so many years' association with Savoy Opera, it was a most refreshing and novel situation in which I found myself on approaching the revival of *The Gondoliers*, the opera which marked my return to the Savoy fold after my disastrous experience as a manager in 1888.

My figure having become, as it were, more regal than of yore naturally suggested the inference, from a Gilbertian point of view, of its unsuitability for the part of a King, and I therefore surrendered my original character of Guiseppe to Harry Lytton, whose regality is more a figure of speech than one of reality.

I made this act of renunciation with the greatest of pleasure, having had, from the very first production of the opera, an intense desire to see what I could do with Don Alhambra, the Grand Inquisitor, to my mind quite one of the best character parts which Gilbert has written, for one reason because he is consistent throughout and, for another, because he has two of the best songs ever penned. My wish was to do away entirely with the "dour" atmosphere in which it was originally played and make him a bland, light-hearted old nobleman who practised all his cruelties with a most engaging and debonair

personality. At the earlier rehearsals, before the advent of the Great Man, this new view of the part thoroughly upset all the tradition-bound members of the company, and reduced the worthy stage manager to a state of nervous uncertainty as to whether I should be executed or he lose his billet. After the remonstrances his sense of duty impelled him to make, and which in no way altered my ideas, he washed his hands of me with the remark, "Well, Sir William will decide the matter when he comes," which Sir William later on did, in my favour, as I had anticipated, and with some very complimentary remarks on "the new reading" which I had not entirely anticipated but was extremely pleased to hear.

On one of the *Mikado* nights, about this time, I heard a laugh that seemed familiar to me coming from one of the boxes, and a careful side-glance (we never looked at the audience at the Savoy) confirmed my suspicions that my old friend George Grossmith had come to see how his original part of Koko was being played, and, incidentally, to laugh at his old friend Pooh Bah if he could. I had not met George since the publication of my first volume of reminiscences, when he kindly sent me a telegram of congratulation with the very characteristic conclusion: "but why seven and six when Ellen Terry, Dan Leno and George Grossmith are only a bob?" I wrote and told him that it was the fault of my publisher, who had refused sternly to consider my modest request for a sixpenny book, and he forgave

me, also by letter, but still expressing disapproval. He came round to tell me what he thought of my performance, after the first act, and in discussing my book told me that I had left out a lot of good things, a fact of which I was already painfully aware, and then proceeded to remind me of one of them, which I had not only forgotten but cannot realise ever happened. He told me that in a private box, quite close to the stage, there was a lonely man, one night, who had lost interest in the opera to such an extent (possibly because his lady had failed him) as to spend the entire evening in reading a newspaper; that I expressed myself as greatly annoyed by this, and that I had finally gone as near to the box as I could, and to the great amusement of the audience had inquired of the lonely non-spectator, "What won the Lincolnshire Handicap?" I cannot help thinking that George's imagination must have been at work, as I should not only have remembered the incident but probably also have had cause to do so.

About this period I attended an exhibition of the then fashionable "Directoire" dresses, which I found extremely pretty, if somewhat "discovering." The exhibition in question was held unheralded by any advertisement at the Savoy Hotel one Sunday night in the restaurant, where I was bidden to dine with two charming American ladies and Bertie Sullivan as our host. We had previously motored down to Grim's Dyke to lunch at Sir William Gilbert's, and play croquet, at which Gilbert is quite an expert, and the contrast between the restful country-house party

and the babel of the restaurant was very vivid. I was rather puzzled by a request from the lady whom I had the pleasure of taking in to dinner, to walk closely in front of her all through the long approach to the restaurant; of course I did so, but could not restrain my curiosity as to the necessity for this apparent rudeness on my part, which she kindly satisfied, when we were seated, by telling me she had forgotten to change her shoes in the hurry of dressing, and was wearing black walking boots, which she feared might be much in evidence owing to the scantity of gown about her feet.

I had another charming invitation about this time from two sweet little ladies, Felicity and Ivy Tree, to the dress rehearsal of *Pinkie and the Fairies*, a lovely show, which I attended with great pleasure, only marred by the impossibility of thanking my young hostesses, who were so occupied with several teddy-bears in their box as to be oblivious of almost everything else. Since the days of *Water-Babies* at the Garrick I have never seen a more delightful assembly of delightful children.

There was one little girl in the stalls behind me, with her mother, whose eyes were fairly dancing with anticipation of delight to come, and I looked forward to the pleasure of hearing her laugh; her mother gave me the opportunity, by removing her hat and very carefully pinning it into the back of my stall with a long hat-pin. I immediately gave a violent shudder and emitted a *piano* shriek as if badly wounded, whereupon the little girl exclaimed in

a horror-struck voice "Mummie!" The mother leant over and expressed her regret, and of course I confessed the truth, that I was absolutely untouched, upon which she remarked: "Oh, well—if you are a humbug——" She could get no further, being interrupted with a peal of delighted laughter from the little one which was good to hear.

On Christmas Eve we played the *Pirates of Penzance* and, as a concession to tradition, I made up for the Sergeant of Police with a red nose, but to my great disappointment the subtlety of the idea totally escaped recognition, even on the part of two visitors I had while making up, and who were lost in admiration at my skill in painting on a pair of black whiskers, the reason for this being that my face had become sore from the spirit gum used in fastening on the genuine article. On one occasion I did this painting-on with black grease-paint, with disastrous results to the face of Jessie Rose, who embraces the Sergeant as a reward for valour; she eliminated the caress, much to my regret, after this blackening of her fair face.

On Boxing Day I was forcibly reminded of the extraordinary way in which Fate fails to reward true unselfishness; I had intended to go to Kempton Park Races, but a snowstorm intervening I determined to travel some little distance to see an invalid brother and, incidentally, lunch with him; on arrival I found he had left home for a week and my sacrifice was in vain. A hasty return to town and the cheerfulness of the club was the only remedy, promptly put into

practice, but the cheerfulness resolved itself into the presence of one solitary member who had missed a train going somewhere, and we played the most depressing game of billiards I ever remember; the centre of the depression only moving on the advent of a man who had been to Kempton and backed a ten-to-one winner in three runners, which we suggested must have been brought about by a "dope," from which we drew a natural inference to our own advantage in the matter of spirits.

At the first rehearsal of *The Gondoliers* it was very odd to watch Harry Lytton rehearsing the part I originally played, and to add to the quaintness of the situation the daughter of the original Don Alhambra, W. H. Denny, who was now in the chorus, I observed frequently studying me with something of the same kind of interest that I was manifesting in Lytton.

I have always had a rooted objection to sitting down and seriously studying my different *rôles*, with the exception, of course, of any very lengthy speeches they may contain which make such a course imperative. This feeling, or perhaps it may be called idiosyncrasy, proceeds very much from the fact that the nature of the different situations, in a well-written play at least, invariably suggests the lines which apply to them, but I most cheerfully admit that the system has its drawbacks, one of them being that other artists concerned do not always get correct cues, thereby increasing their difficulties in learning; this habit of mine has also afforded Gilbert many opportunities of letting fly at me one of his good-

humoured cynical shafts, one of which I received full in the brain at an early rehearsal of this opera; I was concerned in a long scene, all of my part of which was read to me from the prompt-book (the other artists being word-perfect), and at the conclusion of it Gilbert turned to Cellier and remarked, "You know, we could play this to-night!" The situation and joke were highly appreciated by the company at large, and the nervous stage manager in particular; I myself was no more upset by it than was Gilbert, both of us being well aware that "it would be all right at night," as it was.

Owing, so I was told, to the manner in which the part of Guiseppe had been played on the occasion of some former revival, Gilbert was very firm on the exclusion of all gags which I had introduced originally, and which he had himself legalised. This upset Harry Lytton (the present exponent) most terribly, and he appealed to me, as the responsible party, to intercede with Gilbert for their reinstatement, which, I need hardly say, he was quite as likely to accomplish as myself; however, I did as he asked me, with the result that Gilbert kindly sanctioned the use of all the gags with one exception, and on my reminding him that he had not formerly made this exception he gravely stated as his reason for not doing so that "he was afraid of me!"

This remark made me feel for the moment rather conceited, but on due reflection, combined with an intimate knowledge of the character of the remarker, I came to the conclusion that he could not be advanc-

ing his real reason; however, I left it at that, and eventually it was a case of "objection overruled." Meanwhile, when the interval for lunch arrived, Gilbert suggested that I should join his party at the Savoy, which I was naturally very pleased to do, hoping to hear more on the subject; but on arriving there I found he had gone to lunch elsewhere, leaving Lady Gilbert and four other ladies in my charge, as it was their intention to return for the second rehearsal. The feast was of necessity a short and light one, in view of the work to follow, and though I was for a moment dismayed to find they were all "on the water waggon," I was soon consoled, on joining the temperance league, by finding that I had achieved an utterly undeserved reputation for Moderation in the face of duty.

The fifteenth of January, which fell in this week, brought me a most memorable and exciting experience. It happens to be my birthday, as many hundreds of my self-styled "admirers," in whose birthday-books I have written my name, have systematically forgotten. This particular birthday, however, was remarkable for the fact that, on the same night, thirty years before, I had appeared as the captain of the *Pinafore*, and in the rotation of revivals it chanced to be the opera selected for 15th January 1909. How the coincidence leaked out is difficult to determine, but I cannot help surmising that I must have unconsciously mentioned it to some friendly journalist—and indeed the majority of them are quite friendly when not in search of "copy"—for

there was a "preliminary par" on the subject in *The Telegraph*, which gave rise to quite a little excitement; other papers alluded to "this interesting coincidence," and for some three or four evenings I was persistently pursued by interviewers, and finally bearded in my dressing-room by a flashlight photographer, who scoffed at my idea of a royalty on the picture, as indeed I find they always have done in my case.

This particular portrait, however, was never published, so I was not much out of pocket by his refusal, which, however, may have been the cause of its failure to prove attractive, as I had doubtless assumed a disappointed expression.

I have so frequently been rendered envious by the reports of the huge sums annually raked in by certain stage beauties as the result of the sale of their photographs that it has bred an intense desire to make my own face pay its way, as it were, but up to the present day the result has only taken the form of a firm conviction that my face is not my fortune; can it be that these sums have been visionary, or perhaps exaggerated?

The congratulatory telegrams I received on "the" evening were a most pleasant reminder of the friendly feelings entertained for me, not only by personal friends, but from many who were only "friends in front," and I thoroughly enjoyed myself during the performance, and almost persuaded myself that it was impossible that thirty years could have slipped away, between the two evenings.

I finished the celebration with a small supper-party at the Savoy, where I met with the only check to the gaiety of the occasion; not wishing to let my guests see how much they had cost me, I did as one frequently does in such cases: wrote my name across the account and gave it back to the head waiter, who returned in a few minutes with the request that I would "put my address as well"! This is fame!

I am naturally not so inexperienced in the ways of finance as to be unaware of there being another and less tactful reason for the non-immediate settlement of restaurant accounts, my knowledge even extending to an occasional personal application of such reason, but in this particular instance my motive was that which I have mentioned, and I added the address, "Savoy Theatre," with a species of humbly defiant manner, which I fancied would produce an apology, but which entirely failed in its effect.

The birthday merriment had not entirely evaporated by the time for the Saturday matinée of *Mikado*, and it was one of the most delightful I ever remember, the house being literally crowded with children, whose laughter was something to live for. It was a great incentive to be, if possible, more funny than ever, especially in the scene where Pitt, Sing, Koko and Pooh Bah grovel before the Mikado, and the little shrieks of mirth which followed my elephantine antics were ample reward for being a trifle inartistic.

The stage manager remarked, as we made our exit, "Pantomime?" to which I replied, "Yes, for the children of course," but it was abundantly evident

that their grown-up escorts enjoyed the fooling quite as much as their little charges.

The practice of taking children to the theatre appears to me to be largely on the increase, and of course is all the better for trade, but I often wonder who chooses the play to which they shall be taken. There has been quite a large percentage of children at the Vaudeville lately to see *The Girl in the Train*, eminently a play for an adult audience, with a first act almost entirely without movement or song, and which yet they appear to enjoy, although I cannot help the reflection that I hope they do not know what it is all about, but that this is not so in every case was clearly demonstrated one evening by a *blasé* youth of some seven years of age who laughed in all the right (or wrong) places.

These remarks must not be construed as reflecting on the morality of the play; but to educate the young idea in the *modus operandi* of, not to mention the cause for, a divorce case seems to indicate at least unnecessary haste. In the play itself, the innocence of the wrongfully accused heroine is never actually established; the inevitable "happy ending" being arrived at by simply accepting her assertion of innocence as the truth, and it is not difficult to imagine the embarrassment of a mother on being closely questioned by her child as to "what she had done?"

CHAPTER V

"GONDOLIERS" — FOOTBALL — "YEOMEN OF THE GUARD"

On 19th January 1909 I thus had the novel sensation of appearing in a new part in a Gilbert and Sullivan opera, repeating on this occasion an experience which I had for the first time in 1877, although, of course, on this later date the opera was a familiar one instead of a novelty.

In glancing through some of the criticisms of this revival, I am much struck with the marvellous insight displayed by some of the writers, deepening an impression already created in my mind, by the perusal of notices of other plays and performers, which have frequently excited in me a curious kind of wonder as to whether the said performers, myself included, really intended to produce certain effects and impressions ascribed to them, and if they were genuinely possessed of the subtlety with which they are credited.

Thus one of them pronounces on my performance as follows:—"To see him, with the courtly grace of an archbishop, solemnly wink at his own astuteness is an object lesson to the younger generation," a remark which pleases me immensely, and which I accept as a great compliment to the unconscious—or might

one say subconscious—humour developed by my artistic temperament.

By the way, the so-called artistic temperament, which is so frequently alluded to in conversation and literature, on the one hand accounting for the successful portrayal of a part, and possibly the next moment, on the other hand, and in discussing the same artist, as accounting for certain pronounced eccentricities of conduct, has always appealed to me as being a very real attribute, and it was a severe shock to my conviction when discussing the subject with an eminent surgeon, at a dinner-party lately, to find him denying *in toto* the bare possibility of the existence of such a thing.

Even when I ventured to suggest that the delight with which so many of his colleagues undertake operations probably proceeded from their possession of this very temperament I could not convince him, and it was only when I pointed out that if the artistic world were robbed of this well-recognised excuse for its many shortcomings and brilliant achievements it would be imperative to substitute another, that he finally admitted that there might be something in it after all.

This was extremely gratifying, as I could not but feel guilty of a certain presumption in arguing with an eminent wielder of the merciful knife, whose very qualification for his eminence presupposed an intimacy amounting to certitude of all possible contents of the human frame. It is, however, only the knife of inquisitiveness which can dissect a soul, and

the artistic temperament, being equally impalpable, might prove equally difficult of location.

One aspect of the "artistic temperament" is its sublime confidence in its ability to tackle successfully any and every job to which the attention of the possessor may be attracted, not invariably with conspicuous success; this was brought rather vividly to my observation on the occasion of a certain football match (under the title "Church *v.* Stage") which was organised for the Daily Mirror Fund for providing Christmas puddings for poor children, and which took place on the historic ground of Stamford Bridge, where we expect to witness the real article.

It was an undoubted success from the point of view of the Church and the puddings—which sounds rather an odd combination, "plums" we have heard of—but the actors could hardly have been said to shine at the game, not being as light as the component part of suet to the plums should have been.

George Alexander, having had "greatness thrust upon him" in being deputed to "kick off," seemed hardly to realise what he had to kick, and gazed excitedly at the referee, who however appeared unmoved—I presume from force of habit.

I myself had the vaguest idea of my duties as a "linesman," beyond careering up and down the ground, and "wig-wagging" when the ball went into touch; but with a laudable desire to prove my efficiency I twice, nervously but firmly, "foot-faulted" a stalwart cleric named Wilson, who took exception to my remonstrance in a comedian-like manner,

which afforded the onlookers much amusement. Basil Foster was easily the best player on the stage side, and even he reminisced, at the end of the match—"Pudding never gave me such a pain before!"

H. V. Farnfield scored five of the seven goals for the Church, and it seemed to me that, had he given his mind and feet to the game seriously, he might have scored fifty, but there was no doubt that, "for this occasion only," the Church took matters easily, and, in fact, indulged in a levity not usually associated with their profession.

George Robey was the captain of the stage side, and having heard flattering reports of his skill I was much interested in the chance afforded of its manifestation, but, greatly to my disappointment, his mission appeared to be the doubtless excellent one of setting the Church a lesson in unselfishness, his great object, on gaining possession of the ball, being to rid himself of it as quickly as possible. I quote this match principally with the view of supporting my contention that the artistic temperament does exist, and that in the case of the Rev. H. V. Farnfield it took the form of a forbearance to a painstaking and overweighted adversary which was highly meritorious. That the members of the stage team were a painstaking lot was evidenced by three of their number retiring "hurt," and that "virtue is its own reward" was once more exemplified by the eventual carrying off the field of the forbearing cleric!

I was not altogether pleased with my performance, for the first time, of Don Alhambra, but this feeling

of disappointment wore off with succeeding representations and I was finally able to compliment one of the critics on his discernment in stating that it was "one of my best efforts," a dictum with which I thoroughly agree, as indeed, owing to my own artistic temperament, I do with all their pronouncements.

As a slight excuse for awarding myself a certain amount of praise over this delineation, in spite of the part being, in my estimation, one of the most "grateful" I have ever played, I may mention that one of my comrades in the theatre, not too prone to giving encouragement, volunteered the remark that it was "a revelation."

I have spoken of the songs in the part of Don Alhambra, one of which is frequently quoted to this day, with the refrain of "No possible doubt whatever," and which was always tremendously popular, but his song in Act 2, "There lived a King, as I've been told," gave me more pleasure in singing than almost any song I can remember, not only for the delightful humour of the words, but also for the joyous swing of Sullivan's setting, which to me seems, if possible, fuller of humour than many of the others.

Cheered in this way by the approbation of (nearly) all concerned, I set to work seriously, with a light heart (I am not Irish), to study and rehearse yet another new part, that of Wilfrid Shadbolt, the Jailer, in *The Yeomen of the Guard*, which was, alas! to be really the last opera which Mrs Carte intended to present.

This part, owing possibly to the underlying streak of "grimness" it possesses, did not appeal to me quite so strongly as did the lighter vein of Don Alhambra, but in spite of that I was more than pleased at the opportunity it afforded me of being able to say, for the first time, that I had played in every one of the Gilbert and Sullivan series.

The words "study the part" are used advisedly in this particular instance, as, owing to the language of the period in which the plot was placed being adopted by Gilbert (as a matter of course), I found my usual method of allowing the words to "come to me" at rehearsal, only moderately effective.

I practised the method, however, to a certain extent, and with the inevitable result of amusing comments from Gilbert, who gravely announced one day that he had "a presentiment" that I should know my part at the next rehearsal. The presentiment did not prove a correct one, however, and when, after the dress rehearsal, he told me he had "another" I was rather alarmed, until, on my asking him what it was this time, he very kindly said that it was that I should play the part well.

During the rehearsals for the opera, Workman and myself had to apply for an "afternoon off," in order to go down to Richmond, to appear at the annual matinée for the local hospital, and on the way down it occurred to us, as a bright idea, that we might arrange a little unrehearsed effect by way of an "extra turn."

We carried this out by having his number on the

programme displayed on one side of the stage at the same time as was mine on the other, then making a simultaneous entrance from opposite sides, and having a heated discussion as to who should recite first. The audience appeared to enjoy it all immensely, and we felt rather pleased at having thought of it, but a few days later my wife asked me, "What were you and Workman doing together at that Richmond matinée?" I explained, and she enjoyed the joke, but informed me that some friends of ours, who had been present, had told her that "Mr Barrington and Mr Workman came on together, and did something that seemed to please *themselves* very much!"

In *The Yeomen of the Guard* I found myself no longer "alone on the raft" as the sole representative of the original band of Savoyards. My old colleague, Richard Temple, the original Sir Marmaduke in *The Sorcerer*, Deadeye in *Pinafore*, the Mikado, and other parts, emerging from his retirement to undertake his original part of Sergeant Merrill, to the advantage of the general representation.

The constant strain of nightly work combined with daily rehearsals had by this time had their due effect in tiring the company, and, in consequence, understudies were much in request, though I am happy to say that mine was not requisitioned once during the entire season of revivals.

I think it speaks rather well for my "artistic temperament," and also for theirs, that I have been able to maintain the most friendly relations with the many good men who have understudied me at dif-

ferent times and, in one or two cases, for some years, without a single opportunity of making a wished-for appearance in the part, for, although one must acquit understudies of a baleful desire for one's indisposition, it must be a wearisome business to hold that position to an artist who is never absent for any reason.

Workman and Herbert were absentees on account of throat troubles, and even Lytton found the dancing in *Gondoliers* too much for him one night, experiencing something closely resembling a fainting fit in the middle of the chachucha, and being greeted with loud applause on reappearing when the encore had been taken without him.

The weather during the first week of *The Yeomen* was simply dreadful, and all the theatres suffered, both in the business and the loss of artists. Workman had to give up after the second night, and the chorus was somewhat attenuated in numbers if not in figures. The dismal state of the weather was not the only factor in the debâcle, as it was a general consensus of opinion that the opera, although so great a favourite with audience and artists, was a depressing one to play on successive nights, and the relief when a change came, in the ordinary repertoire way, was undoubted.

I myself shared in the feeling of depression which lasted during the entire run of four weeks, and culminated on the last evening with all the girls crying at the end of the play, despite a most appreciative audience, a great call for all concerned, general

enthusiasm, and a crowd of between two and three hundred demonstrative admirers gathered about the stage door to greet the departure of their popular favourites. I do not remember ever feeling more embarrassed than I was on this occasion. It was impossible to ascend the steps leading to the street except with the exercise of some gentle pressure, and I was cheered, and handshaken, and demonstratively kissed until I reached my cab, the same treatment being impartially bestowed on several other members of the company.

It was undoubtedly a great night, and a most delightful wind-up to a series of revivals, which I can only hope were as interesting to the audiences as they were to me personally. I created a record in not missing one performance throughout, a pleasant recollection, for which, however, I naturally do not wish to claim any credit, these things not being in our own hands.

As I left the scene of so many delightful evenings, and so many pleasant personal successes, my thoughts involuntarily went back to the time when the alert little figure of my old friend and manager, D'Oyly Carte, was constantly in evidence ; and mingled with the regret that he should not have been able to take part in a scene such as his kindly disposition would have revelled in was the added sorrow that Mrs D'Oyly Carte had been prevented by illness from participating in what I think one might term a historic farewell. I am truly grateful to her for the opportunity afforded me of not only playing some of

MRS D'OYLY CARTE AND MYSELF AT THE GARDEN-PARTY GIVEN BY HER TO THE SAVOY COMPANY

my old and favourite parts, but also for the chance of appearing in the two new ones which for me completed the cycle; and, although I have not the least doubt that the future will see further revivals of these operas, it is only human to wonder if they can possibly take place under the same management, and whether a kind Fate may have it in store for me to make a reappearance in some or any of them. It does not seem so very great a stretch of imagination to fancy that every stick and stone of the Savoy Theatre is so thoroughly impregnated with the Gilbert and Sullivan atmosphere as to render the management of it, for the reproduction of these operas, a comparatively easy task, nor, in saying this, will anyone for a moment imagine that any slight is intended on the well-known and frequently evidenced business capacity of Mrs Carte, but, failing her, I can almost imagine the ghosts of the past taking matters into their own hands, and giving performances for all to see who have the courage to revisit the "pale glimpses of the moon" on certain nights in "the wee sma' hours ayont the twal'.

That anyone venturing on such an excursion would be received with the courtesy for which the Savoy is noted would be guaranteed by the presence, at all hours of the night, of my old friend, Kelly, of the fire brigade, who has kept watch and ward over the ghosts of the operas ever since the old days of the Opera Comique.

CHAPTER VI

ORANGE BLOSSOMS — DINNER FOR TWO — FALLEN FAIRIES

ONCE again it seemed my fate to turn my attention to the "Halls," which are undoubtedly an "ever-pleasant refuge" to the unengaged actor. I determined to give another trial to the sketch I produced with some success at the Shepherd's Bush Empire, called *Man the Lifeboat*, and, it having occurred to me that, instead of the old Coxswain of the boat describing the launch and return of it with the rescued man, it would increase the interest to have it actually seen by means of cinematograph films, I cast about for the means of fulfilling this end.

After a careful examination of all existing films I could only discover one which I thought might be of use to me—a rescue of a man in the water done by the Hastings crew—but the preliminaries were unsuitable, the launch and return being of the mildest description, and carried out surrounded by a self-evident crowd of trippers and onlookers in immaculate flannels and straw hats, betokening a perfect summer day.

I called on the Secretary of the Lifeboat Institution, told him my trouble and received a most courteous permission to make my own arrangements with the

officer and crew of the Deal Lifeboat, provided these arrangements synchronised with a "practice."

Armed with an introduction to Mr Prior, the local official, the rest was comparatively easy, and having agreed with Coxswain Adams to take advantage of the first really breezy morning with a bit of a sea on, I established myself and a cinematograph operator in the near neighbourhood of the boat-house, and patiently awaited developments, both of a weather and photographic description, hardening my muscles for my proposed arduous duties as Coxswain by the frequent use of my golf clubs.

I had already borrowed a cottage, from which I was to rush forth on receiving the summons for the boat, and sent there my "uniform" and cork-jacket, so was fully prepared for business when Coxswain Adams called one night at my hotel to inform me that "the wind was freshening, and the boat would be wanted at seven-thirty the next morning." Sure enough, when I was "roused out" about six-thirty, I found a nice grey day and, for Deal at this time of year, a fairly rough sea running, so I hastily got into my kit, not without certain misgivings as to the possibility of the amateur Coxswain being seasick.

Coxswain Adams is a typical Deal boatman, a true representative of the thick-set, hardy men who maintain the best traditions of their kind, men who make nothing of the worst weather imaginable when there is a prospect of saving life, and who take everything as it comes with a stolid acquiescence which is truly remarkable. Adams spent an hour

or so with me one night in the cosy bar of the Royal, and though his potations were limited to one "three-finger" grog, it served to open the port-hole which imprisoned some capital and interesting yarns.

I had of course rehearsed the real Coxswain and the crew in the little drama which they were to represent, and they played their parts splendidly, with the one slight drawback that, instead of assuming the desired tragic expression demanded by the situation of saving a drowning man, they persisted in regarding the affair as a huge joke, and roaring with laughter when the aged and ailing Coxswain (myself), in rushing to his post, in spite of failing strength, measured his length on the rough beach from sheer physical distress, and was assisted to rise by the genuine Coxswain and one of the crew. Fortunately these cheerful smiles, although of an expansive nature, were not discernible on the film later on, partly owing to my shouts of "Don't grin," and more perhaps to the sea-going method of concealing merriment with the hand over the mouth.

My sensations when, having run up the ladder into the boat, amid the cheers of the waiting crew, I grasped the tiller and gave the word "Let her go!" I shall never forget. The beach at Deal is steep, and as the enormous boat gathered way, and rushed down to meet a succession of fairly huge waves, I felt a sense of great exhilaration, modified with that of a responsibility for the lives of the gallant fellows who had placed themselves so trustingly in my care.

However, all passed off satisfactorily, and after

sailing out for a couple of miles or so, during which there was sea and wind enough to give us a thorough soaking in spite of mackintoshes, we made the return trip in great style—the Hastings boat having saved the drowning man we went out for some months before we received the "call"—and I returned to the hotel for a ten-o'clock breakfast, with which I was very pleased to meet, thoroughly satisfied and delighted with my first and last appearance (on the water) as Coxswain of the Lifeboat.

The two films combined made an excellent illustration of a launch and rescue, and were received with great applause when I produced the sketch at the Metropolitan Music Hall, but, to my great disappointment and, I may also say, surprise, the sketch failed to "book on," and beyond a visit to Jersey and Guernsey I did nothing more with it. Among other reasons for this result—a rather heart-breaking one after all the expense I had been put to in preparing for it—was one given by a friend of mine, who probably struck at the root of the matter in saying: "It's not your part, Barry: they want you to be funny—and they hate you to die." I gave up dying at the end of the sketch after that, and sang a verse of a song in praise of "a mug of beer," but, although it certainly seemed to inprove it, it was perhaps too late to save it; be that as it may, I have still faith in the sketch, and shall some day hire the boat out to some tragedian, by the hour, or two shows nightly.

A friend and fellow-actor (not always synonymous) who came to see it played at Shepherd's Bush, on his

own initiative, confessed to me afterwards that he came in a critical mood and that I had surprised and touched him with my display of "rugged force and pathos," so perhaps when the above-mentioned tragedian takes over the command the little play may earn the success I feel it deserves.

Our journey to the Channel Islands was marked by one very pleasant little incident. I had reserved a compartment for myself and company in the train from Paddington to Weymouth, the train was abnormally crowded, and I found my "preserves" had been invaded by two young girls who had made themselves comfortable in two of the best corners and who resolutely refused to move to another carriage. Although I remonstrated with them personally they stuck to their guns—and corners—and I rather admired them for it. The train started, and in the course of conversation it transpired that they were also appearing in the same programme as we were, both in Jersey and Guernsey; that my agent had told them, in engaging them, that I was going and they had better look out for me on the train—which they had done to some purpose. This put a somewhat different complexion on their invasion, and we all became most friendly, and remained so for the week, both of them proving charming additions to our party.

We were most hospitably entertained one night in Jersey by a friend we made on the links at Gorey, and who kindly got up a poker-party for Hanworth, Browning and myself, at which he and his friends

relieved us of all the profits we had not made during the week. There was a rule to the effect that anyone holding "fours of a kind" was to receive an extra sovereign from each player, and this occurred three times in no time, whereupon Browning suggested the abolition of the rule; this was of course acceded to, and the next hand that was dealt found me with four aces, for which I received about four shillings.

Guernsey was "one night only" on the way back to the mainland, but appears to be a better town for entertainments than Jersey; at all events we had quite a good house and appeared to be very popular, so much so that we were invited to stay on and give another evening; but it could not be arranged and we left for Weymouth with a pleasant sense of comfort at our reception which was rudely dispelled by a very stormy crossing.

On my return to town I signed a contract for four weeks at the London Pavilion with yet another sketch—a musical one this time, with one of my favourite topical songs in it, and a dance in addition. The title of it was *Orange Blossoms*, and I had the good fortune to secure Miss Pollie Emery for one of the parts and Miss Dorothy Craske for the other. The audiences appeared to enjoy it immensely, and it ran merrily for the four weeks, when it shared the same fate as the *Lifeboat*.

My part in it was that of a retired admiral, and one afternoon when I was being shaved at Shipwright's I was much interested on hearing from the "artist in attendance" that he had been to see me the night

before. I naturally invited his criticism of the performance, knowing that these men are all great frequenters of theatres and halls, and more than fairly intelligent judges. I waited his dictum with some trepidation, which was justified when he said: "I only remarked one thing, sir—that your hair was rather long."

There was a tremendous storm in a tea-cup on the second night of this engagement; the dressing-room accommodation is somewhat limited here—as it is indeed at several of the older halls in London—and Miss Emery and Miss Craske had perforce to share a room with a well-known variety star, who, instead of welcoming two such charming ladies, chose the alternative of being very unpleasant to them; rather to their amusement. She informed the stage manager that, unless it were altered, she would there and then leave the place. He very wisely replied: "Do so, by all means, if you wish." She did, but—returned in less than ten minutes, in time for her "turn," and by way of insisting on her fancied rights placed a screen in the dressing-room, depriving the two other ladies of her own charming society and that of all the lights in the room.

What quaint ideas are occasionally induced by the artistic temperament in the direction of self-importance!—though not so much in evidence in the sterner sex, as proved by the fact that Neil Kenyon, Whit Cunliffe, Tom Clare and myself had the use of one room only and yet were not fractious over it, even though its dimensions were not great, and subject to

a steady stream of song-writers anxious to interview Cunliffe. During this engagement I had my first experience of appearing at two different halls a night. I had signed a three weeks' contract with the Tivoli management to appear with Yorke Stephens in a duologue written by R. C. Carton, the well-known author, called *Dinner for Two*, and one week of the engagement overlapped with that at the Pavilion.

The times are of course arranged to allow margin enough for travelling from one place to another, but I had a narrow escape of being late one night at the Pavilion owing to one or two artists dropping out of the bill unexpectedly. My number went up as I entered the door, but fortunately I had no change of costume to make, so the situation was saved.

Both Yorke Stephens and myself came to the conclusion that *Dinner for Two* did not end satisfactorily, and we put our views before the author, but they were not his for some days, though when he eventually yielded to our gentle compulsion the result was a proof that we had been right in our diagnosis.

My experience is that the end of the sketch is the great difficulty in music-hall works. The whole thing has to be a kind of crescendo of laughter, and must finish with the best laugh of all, to be successful, and an additional trial is that one cannot allow any time for an explanation of the plot, which must, as the French put it, *sauter aux yeux* in the first few lines.

There is another factor of importance in the success of these sketches—the feminine element.

There are certain sketches of a rough-and-tumble order which will win approbation and cause amusement, that do not require the presence of woman at all, but should a playlet be presented, comic or pathetic, absolutely demanding the inclusion of one or more of the softer sex, their representatives must be the last word of beauty and fashion if the sketch is to be a success, which will account for the anachronism of a maid-servant or waitress possessing valuable jewellery and dressing in the most expensive silks and satins, the only sign of economy being their attenuated length and breadth.

These simple (?) facts make sketch-writing for the halls a very difficult task, though most people fancy it is easy enough, and write accordingly.

The hard work of the double engagement had perhaps tired me somewhat, as one afternoon, when I had been seeing off some friends at Victoria Station, I had been forced to recognise the desirability of a whisky and soda; on chatting with the attendant Hebe during the process of acquisition she remarked: "You do put me in mind of Rutland Barrington—are you ever taken for him?" I told her that I was considered to bear a faint resemblance to the well-known actor; whereupon she added: "I thought so—but of course he is much more sprightly than you." I answered with a very chilly "Indeed?" Whereupon she hastened to soften the blow by saying: "But *you* are better-looking." I then paid for my refreshment.

Shortly after this the rumours which assigned the

next tenancy of the Savoy Theatre to C. H. Workman received confirmation, and the reopening was duly announced, and within a few weeks an accomplished fact. The play chosen was called *The Mountaineers*, but it failed to attain any great altitude of success. It was followed by the new opera by Gilbert which had been frequently alluded to, but which I had, for some inexplicable reason, fully made up my mind would never see the light. It did, however, and finally proved to be a musical version of one of his old Haymarket successes called *The Wicked World.*

I have very clear recollections of the charming performances given by Madge Robertson, W. H. Kendal (who later on became her husband), and, above all, by that ripe old comedian Buckstone, as serving-man to the two knights. Whether it was that I could find nothing in this later version to overshadow these three artists, or whether the fact that turning so much of the dialogue into lyrics militated against the interest I had felt in the original play, I cannot determine, but I am inclined to attribute much of the failure of the opera to catch on to the fact that, owing to the entire absence of men's voices to balance the mass of soprani and alti, one's ears suffered from an unavoidable weariness, and a longing for the robust report of the male choristers ; the humour of the play also seemed to me to have evaporated, to a great extent, with its conversion, and in spite of Workman's heroic efforts in Buckstone's old part, or possibly because of them, he

did not provide the comic relief one looked for so anxiously; although he sang the two songs allotted to his part excellently well, I was conscious all the evening of a desire to hear one of the other two men, with their manly voices, indulge in a solo.

After the withdrawal of *Fallen Fairies* there was another production, which I believe met with a certain success, enough at least to warrant its migration to another theatre, but as far as the Savoy went its doors were closed for the time being.

The habit of "transplanting" plays seems to be largely on the increase, and in some cases with excellent results, but it has always been a mystery to me why a play which is proving a doubtful success should be expected to survive a removal, and, on the other hand, why a really successful one should be exiled in favour of something untried.

Of course previous contracts loom largely as factors in the *bouleversement*, and may occasionally be the true reason, but the danger of transplanting a tender flower is obvious, and yet numbers of theatrical gardeners are constantly courting it, and generally with the inevitable result.

Peter's Mother was a play which I believe travelled about from theatre to theatre, meeting with the same success in all, thereby establishing a dangerous precedent, but *Peter's Mother* was an exceptional person, and even she might have been alive now had she not been exposed to so many varied draughts.

There is undoubtedly something in the argument

of the suitability of a theatre for one class of entertainment and one only; it would be incongruous to find a rollicking farce at His Majesty's, for instance, or tragedy at the Criterion; so it would surely be wiser to wait with your play for the right theatre. This, it seems to me, is amply demonstrated by the the case of the Savoy; one is tempted to wonder if some occult influence is at work to deny prosperity to any and every production at this theatre other than Gilbert and Sullivan opera! That there have undoubtedly been other successes made there, notably by Greet, Vedrenne and Barker, and quite lately by Marie Brema, no one is likely to dispute, but a lengthy period of prosperity seems impossible of attainment except with the operas for which the theatre was built; it is a charming little house, easily accessible, which in the old days it decidedly was not, and yet this sad fate seems to attach to it; the solution of the enigma might be invaluable to the next tenant.

If it were possible, on the part of some interested syndicate, to tempt me to become the next adventurer I should certainly commence the campaign with one of the old Savoy successes, not necessarily Gilbert and Sullivan, but possibly one of the two or three operas sandwiched between the series, notably *The Vicar of Bray* or *Haddon Hall*; this method might, followed by a Gilbert and Sullivan opera, lay the ghost of the unlucky influence, and, while dormant, I would seize the opportunity of producing something entirely new and original, which, if successful on its

merits, might be the awakening of a new era to the Savoy. I present this idea to the consideration of anyone interested in occultism, though the conjunction of occultists and syndicates appears somewhat anachronistic.

CHAPTER VII

THE CRITICS—THE CRITICISMS—THE CRITICISED

THE portrait which accompanies this chapter is that of my old friend Ernest Bendall, to whom I believe I am justified in alluding as the Doyen of Critics at the present day, he having uninterruptedly "observed" and criticised my efforts, and others, since 1873, and invariably with that "open mind" which is so artistically and delicately hinted at in the attitude of the door in the photograph. I have endeavoured to induce an identical state of mind to pervade the following pages, which have not in any way been inspired by consultation or conversation with him or any of his *confrères*, but are the usual carelessly expessed opinions and ideas of one of "the criticised," who confesses to a deep debt of gratitude for much kindly encouragement and grateful reading.

The position of dramatic critic on an influential, and consequently important, journal is, for many reasons, a desirable objective to any journalist. Also, for quite as many reasons, if not more—as amongst them must be included each individual member of the theatrical profession—it is by no means invariably an enviable one. Several prominent artists, both on the English and French stage, have expressed an

opinion to the effect that a personal acquaintance between critic and criticised is a thing to be avoided, but to the best of my recollection they have none of them offered any solution of the difficulty.

In the first place it is impossible to dictate to any person on the subject of any acquaintances that person may choose to make, or be forced to make, and such is the contrariety of human nature that even the slightest indication of such a prohibition is, in most cases, considered a sufficient reason for at once seeking the acquaintance of the person indicated. Also the very occupation of critic and artist is to a certain extent carried on on the common ground of the theatre, additional facilities for meeting being of late years afforded by the presence at dress rehearsals, and even earlier ones, of the critics. Then there are also club life and society gatherings to add to the complications of the problem "to know or not to know," not to speak of the intellectual advantage accruing to the artist—whose mind must of necessity be somewhat self-centred—with the opportunity of discussing cause and effect with some representative of a body of men whose erudite minds are trained to point out the best means of obtaining an effective whole, so frequently thrown out of balance by an over-predominating part.

With the enormous increase in society functions and entertainments of all sorts one would imagine a corresponding increase in opportunities of meeting, but I venture to think that this is not the case, as these gatherings, from their very size, number and

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promiscuity, have lost some of their distinctiveness of former times.

In the early Victorian era novelists and *literati* of all descriptions were in the habit of alluding to a certain section of society as "Bohemia," wherein was represented all that was most notable in the hemispheres of Art, Letters and the Stage, leavened with a sprinkling of titled dilettanti in these worlds, and an occasional statesman, who sought the brilliant circle as a relaxation from his arduous duties of framing laws to govern it, and possibly with the (unconfessed) object of obtaining a few useful hints as to the framing of such laws.

The radical and the socialist were not greatly in evidence in those times, the latter because he was then non-existent, and the former probably for the reason that he sought no relaxation from the stern path of duty, and admitted very little power, on the part of others of a different creed, to instruct, advise or modify—an attitude of intolerance which seems to be largely on the increase with all members of all political creeds. I myself profess Unionist principles, and, when discussing political affairs, experience so strong a feeling of indignation should any of my statements be refuted that I refrain from any indulgence in the practice.

Why this desirable circle was so christened, or by whom, I have never discovered, but that the *entrée* to it was most eagerly sought is an undoubted fact, and to establish a kind of *salon* for its gatherings was the object of many charming hostesses who had

the good fortune to possess a husband, brother or male belonging of sorts, eminent in some one of the directions indicated, or who had themselves qualified for the position.

My own modest achievements, backed by kindly introductions on the part of one or two already qualified members, procured me the great pleasure of being received at all the receptions I could find time and inclination to attend, and the lack of inclination was never the cause of an omission.

Two of the most delightful houses were those of Boughton, the great artist, and Joseph Hatton, the novelist and journalist, and at neither of these was it possible to pass a dull moment or meet a really dull person. No one was ever asked to contribute to the evening's entertainment, for the very good reason that anyone who could do anything volunteered to do it, with the result that one had a musical, dramatic and conversational *soirée* such as even the wealth of a Rockefeller could hardly have purchased.

The actor, for the nonce, put on no "side," the critic came without his cynicism, and the conversationalist assumed an unwonted brilliance in the genial atmosphere; the "turns," all voluntary, were keenly appreciated, in direct contrast to the attitude of the modern deadhead, who sees very little to praise in gratuitous entertainment, and many a "first appearance" was made under auspices which were inspiring instead of the dreaded nerve-racking ordeal.

Critics and criticised met on the most friendly footing; plays, players and authors were discussed in the

most fearless manner, and even personalities indulged in, and received in the spirit in which they were made.

Under such circumstances it was inevitable that the two should meet and know each other, and if the critic had perforce to fall foul of his good friend's next performance he did so with all the good will of which he was possessed, and in the full knowledge of his friend's equal good will in the perusal of his opinion.

I am not sure but that the words "his opinion" do not furnish the key to the complacency with which artists regard an adverse criticism of their work; of course, a criticism of a praiseful nature is accepted as a tribute on the part of the public at large, as expressed by the one writer, whereas the criticism which points out certain flaws or faults in the work of either actor or author may legitimately be regarded as the expression of opinion of one man alone, and therefore to be treated as an error of judgment which must not be allowed to affect a personal friendship.

Be it as it may, there is no doubt that the position of the conscientious critic is by no means enviable when he has, in pursuance of his duty to the public, to throw a lurid light on the shortcomings of his friend, and it is much to the credit of both parties in the matter that they can, and do, maintain the *entente cordiale* in the fullest sense of the expression.

Another point which the critic must inevitably bear in mind, although the stern moralist might contend that it should not influence his writing, is the

great expense incurred by his possibly personal friend, the manager, in the production, a very large item indeed, nowadays, in the case of musical plays. Is he to blame that, with this consideration in mind, justice is occasionally over-tempered with mercy? We may be told that what is spent in this direction is no affair of the public, but it is done to please the public eye, and only those who have tried it know the difficulty of criticism which shall not raise the cry of partiality or incompetence.

The pleasing of the eye has, it seems to me, become of more importance than it formerly was, hence the enormous outlay on "productions," but it is a moot point whether the public have demanded this expenditure or the managers been compelled to offer it under the stress of increased competition.

A well-known and popular comedian, with whom I was dicussing criticisms lately, apropos a species of modified reproof we had both received at the hands, or rather pen, of one of our friend-enemies, gave it as his opinion that "there should be no critics, and that plays should simply be reported," but I hardly think he could have been in earnest in saying this, as he immediately afterwards agreed with me that certain other pronouncements in certain other journals "formed very pleasant reading"!

Of course it is very easy to say that "personalities" are not criticism, nor are they, but personality enters so largely into the work of author, actor or artist that it really becomes somewhat difficult to determine where personality ends and art begins.

The most successful actors, and, for the purposes of this argument, I mean, by most successful, those occupying the most highly paid positions, most undoubtedly owe not a little of their success to strong personality, which may be manifested, in my humble opinion, in one of three ways: good looks, atmosphere, or mannerism, for none of which, I contend, has the artist the power to claim any credit, unless it be possibly the third, which may certainly be cultivated, improved upon or changed, at the will of the possessor, or even in some cases invented—but which, as being the least important of the three, is hardly an attribute on which to bestow credit.

The two first are obviously gifts, either of nature or a bountiful providence, and, of the two the possession of the second, "atmosphere," is a factor in success the value of which it is impossible to overestimate, for whereas the first is liable to all the accidents of the human frame, including that worst accident of all, age, the latter is an undying and unassailable asset.

To an artist blessed by Fate with these two great gifts everything is possible, but the instances are represented far more by the exception than the rule, whereas the fortunate recipients of the second, even though unaccompanied by the smallest modicum of the former, may, luckily for the English stage and lovers of the theatre, be counted by dozens.

It would be an invidious task to give examples of present-day actors and actresses who possess, or lack, beauty, atmosphere or mannerisms, although never-

theless a very easy one, for it is not possible for any human being to sit in the auditorium of a theatre without feeling the species of magnetism due to the personal atmosphere emanating from the really talented artist the moment he or she appears in sight.

Irving was a very striking and strong example of this personal atmosphere, and his son, H. B., possesses it in a marked degree; Charles Wyndham, Gerald du Maurier and Charles Hawtrey undoubtedly have it, and amongst the ladies of the stage the two most pronouncedly gifted with it are Marie Tempest and Ethel Irving; to none of these is it possible to do anything inartistic, and even if they do not always please one as much as they have educated us into expecting, they do not disappoint in the same measure as would another artist, lacking the atmosphere, in the same part.

Mr Henry Arthur Jones has lately been venturing into print, in praise of the actors of what is known as "the old school," and drawing comparisons unfavourable to those of the present time. There is much to be said on both sides of the argument, but it occurs to me that a clearer definition of what is meant by "the old school" would be advantageous to the discussion.

To take a few names at random, I myself have seen Phelps, Vining, Creswick, Buckstone, Compton, Sothern (who perhaps was the advance guard of the modern style of acting), Miss Bateman, Miss Leclerq, and others too numerous to mention, who belonged, I imagine, to the school indicated, and of the trage-

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dians I recollect an impression of a somewhat laboured diction and corresponding action, producing a dilatoriness which possibly accounted for the early hour at which plays in those days were commenced. There was an irresistible dry humour about Buckstone and Compton, which is perhaps rare in these days—but so it was then—while to match the charm and style of the ladies of that era with present examples is an easy task surely.

Possibly one reason why artists in those days achieved a more lasting fame than is granted to us of the present, lies in the fact that there are now three theatres where there then existed but one, and, consequently, with the increasing number of artists comes an increasing number of talented individuals, with the result of spreading, as it were, the jam, both of admiration and notoriety, over a much greater number of slices of bread. It is only in the nature of things that the talent of an artist should improve with experience, and since the abolition of the "stock company" this can only be acquired by long years of work; so that the term "old school" would seem to apply equally to the stage veterans of the present day—a veteran in experience being by no means of necessity a veteran in years.

There has been of late years a most marked alteration in the social status of the actor and actress as compared with that which obtained in the early Victorian era, which has most undoubtedly been responsible for the recruiting of a larger number of persons of a better class than those which formerly

filled the rank and file of the stage army. When I first embarked upon the chequered voyage of a theatrical career (I seem to be rather mixing the Army metaphor with the Naval, but they are inseparable) it was, for some occult reason, deemed a necessity that the tyro should veil his identity under an assumed name; arising, I believe, from a lingering suspicion that the stage as a profession was hardly respectable; this idea has been considerably modified of late years, and yet, as far as one can see, without any very marvellous accession to the respectability which then existed, and is even now fully as much the rule as the exception. We have only to glance at the male choristers in any or all of the present musical plays, or the extra ladies and gentlemen of the drama houses, to be convinced of this improvement, if improvement it be, because, although it is infinitely preferable to watch the efforts of a smart and even athletic-looking crowd of young fellows, it is impossible not to occasionally miss the voice-training to which the chorister of former days had to submit to qualify for the position.

A common form of present-day criticism is that which reads somewhat after this fashion: "Those admirable comedians, Blank and Blink, lent invaluable aid to the scenes in which they appeared, and we have little doubt that when they have had time to build up their parts *in the usual manner*, they will be as mirth-provoking in this as in anything we have yet seen them do."

This is naturally a direct incentive to Blank and

Blink to "improve" on the author, and possibly, in the hands and brains of a capable and careful Blank and Blink, may be an important factor in the successful run of the play, but the question frequently arises, how, where and by whom is a watch to be kept on the firm of fun, and a restraining influence exercised.

Blish and Blush, who are playing the subalterns, as it were, to their fun-captains, consider themselves entitled to the same freedom of speech, with the not infrequent result that the humorous scenes become so inordinately lengthened as to throw the play out of balance and develop a weariness of spirit on the part of the audience which the author, in originally framing the sequence of scenes, has spent careful hours in endeavouring to avoid. I have seen this sense of irresponsibility on the part of the comedians spread like an infection and attack the members of the company who are representing the serious or love interest portion of the play, with the result that not only has the intention of the author become thoroughly obscured, but also that an air of insincerity has been imparted to the serious side of the argument which has reduced the audience to a state of annoyance at what is apparently a liberty taken with their understanding and purchased enjoyment, and seriously endangered the success of what may have been a well-thought-out scheme on the part of the author.

This is not altogether the fault of the comedians, for within my own experience (outside Savoy Opera, I need hardly remark) I have met authors who have

deliberately left Blank and Blink to write their own scenes, those of them who were sufficiently wary safeguarding themselves by arranging that such scenes had little or nothing to do with the plot of the piece.

An excellent anodyne for the divergence from the paths of art—I use a medical term advisedly for a procedure which is frequently the ground of a complaint—might be found in the fortnightly or monthly application of a critical liniment of praise or censure well rubbed in with a practised hand, but at present there is but slight notice taken of a successful play between its production and the "second edition," which is usually forthcoming after the lapse of some twelve or eighteen months, thus leaving a considerable interval free for the development of these personal idiosyncrasies which do not invariably please.

This mode of treatment, however, would not be an easy matter to arrange, as, owing to the enormous number of productions in all directions, the dramatic critic is already an overworked personage and should not, in common fairness, be condemned to sit in constant judgment on the same play or set of players.

A book which I have lately read with much pleasure and interest, written by Mr Spencer, the talented critic of *The Westminster Gazette*, although covering a great deal of ground, leaves me with the hope that he will gratify us with a second and more exhaustive volume. Although on one or two points I join issue with his reasoning—I being an actor,

he a critic, this is but fitting—there is, to my mind, evidence on every page of a man who knows and loves his subject, writes on it fearlessly, and has a great desire to see the English stage in the forefront of honour attributable to good work on the part of both authors and delineators.

In discussing the imperative necessity of a love story in plays—which, I gather, he believes need not exist—he makes the remarkable statement that "love in the Gilbert and Sullivan operas is treated with cruel levity." To what opera does he allude? In *Pinafore*, *Mikado* and *Pirates* love conquers disparity in rank, and where can he find more dignified or tender tales of love than the double interest in *Yeomen of the Guard* and Casilda and Luiz in *Gondoliers*? The passion of the middle-aged woman for the youth in one or two of the operas is perhaps treated with a "cruel levity," but is surely a phase of love which has earned it from time immemorial, and after all, in those operas, is only a secondary interest.

In speaking of the importance, or the reverse, of "make-up" he puts forth this proposition: "Can it be that the triumphs, that we sometimes see, of the actress over the actor, are partly due to the fact that she reduces make-up to the minimum?"

The make-up practice of the ladies of the stage is, in my experience, confined almost entirely to securing the effect of superhuman eyelashes and scarlet mouths of a stereotyped shape entirely without reference as to their harmony with the other features, the gaining of which effects usually occupies anything from an

hour to an hour and a half, and, more often than not, seems to necessitate the use of a trowel in application. I shall never forget the comic distress of the Savoy company concerning what they considered the enforced ugliness of the make-up for *The Mikado*, and my dear old friend Rosina Brandram, of the glorious voice, left no doubt that hers was indeed a make-up and nothing like an attempt to conceal her youth. The restlessness of English acting is another thing which Mr Spencer finds fault with, and here I am in complete accord with him, as I fancy would be the majority of his readers; the enormous value of repose is not generally appreciated, and the power to assist a somewhat lengthy scene with an almost wordless effectiveness is indeed rare; in truth I have known cases of actors and actresses declining to remain on "all through that with nothing to say," ignoring the fact that the author has probably planned it so with a purpose.

I should like to say something on the subject of self-elected critics, but this chapter, being already of an inordinate length, seems to shake a warning finger with a blot of printer's ink on it which is plainly decipherable as a full stop.

CHAPTER VIII

ON TOUR WITH "THE WALLS OF JERICHO"—A WORD ON AUCTION BRIDGE

FAILING to find my services sought by London managers as eagerly as a number of my friends tried to persuade me they should and would be, and being still determined to continue in a profession for which I consider Nature to have bountifully equipped me —not to mention the obvious necessity of earning a living—I came to the conclusion to try a flight into the region of comedy, being largely persuaded thereto not only by the foregoing reasons, but also by the prospect of trying in the provinces a new play by a personal friend, in which I had great confidence, and of which more anon.

The additional temptations also included, beyond the decent living wage, a percentage of the problematical profits, and, as the play to be toured was that pronounced moneymaker *The Walls of Jericho*, by Alfred Sutro, the problem had every appearance of being solvable, in spite of the fact that in some of the towns selected it was the third, fourth and even fifth visit. These hopes were damped to a certain extent by the heat wave which visited London during the fortnight in which we rehearsed, but I reflected that this damping was only the natural result of our

exertion in such weather and could not really affect the result.

We left town on 15th August, with a most excellent company of clever and pleasant people, for Harrogate, where the campaign was to open, and where we naturally found a host of friends eager for some distraction from "the cure."

With a view to adding an additional attraction to the programme, and giving myself perhaps a greater opportunity for distinction than was afforded by the part I played in the piece, it was arranged that I should give a short entertainment before the play, consisting of songs, stories, recitations and an occasional short duologue, in which I had the assistance of Miss Florence Steventon and Miss Trevor-Lloyd on different occasions.

These ladies were respectively the Tiny Mornington and Lady Alethea Frobisher in *The Walls*, as it was abbreviatively christened by the staffs of the theatres we visited, and the part I selected was that of the mercenary old aristocrat, the Marquis of Steventon, played originally, I believe, by Mr O. B. Clarence; he does rather more to excite the contempt than the sympathy of the audience, which is scarcely a recommendation to a player, but being next in importance to the hero, Jack Frobisher (who is, by the way, a good deal of a prig), which part I did not see myself attempting, appeared to offer the best chance of distinction.

The success of the first night, as far as regards the play, was most pronounced, but my preliminary

personal efforts to amuse were received with a certain modified enthusiasm which suggested the idea that the material was slightly old-fashioned; this view was confirmed the following evening, by which time I had effected some radical changes which proved of great advantage.

We followed the usual routine of three nights in Harrogate and three in Buxton, a procedure necessitating a somewhat strenuous day in mid-week; leaving Harrogate fairly early and spending an hour in Leeds *en passant* we arrived in Buxton at two-thirty, with a band rehearsal in prospect at five-thirty and the night's work to follow.

I occupied myself during most of the journey in lengthening a little musical duologue, called *The Lost E Flat*, by means of introducing a recitation by a parson who forgets every other line and is prompted by Mrs Vicar; and, Miss Steventon and myself being fortunately quick studies, it was put in the same evening, with happy results; it was also very gratifying to be told by Mr Sylvanus Dauncey, our manager, that our receipts in both Harrogate and Buxton had beaten the previous visit of *The Walls*; it made the profits seem far less problematical and, in fact, induced a spirit of gaiety which found vent in the composing of a song, entitled "Problematical," which is not yet published.

From Buxton to Birkenhead was a disturbing transition, only made palatable by the solicitude for one's comfort shown by mine host Turner of the Woodside Hotel, whom I had eventually to accuse

of trying to make me over-eat, his excuse being that it was a treat to supply good things to an appreciative customer. One of the great charms of Birkenhead is the ease with which one can leave it for Hoylake, Wallasey and other good golf links, while, if excitement is a desideratum, Liverpool is close handy; two or three of us adjourned there on Saturday night after the play, to be most hospitably entertained at the Racquet Club, from where we journeyed home by the ferry at three o'clock to the accompaniment of a chill wind and strong drizzle.

Having some time to wait for the boat we very nearly succeeded in bribing the skipper of a rival line to put us over, but as he was honest enough to admit that he didn't think they would allow his boat to go alongside the landing stage we relinquished the idea, not wishing to do a "round trip" with a possibility of being blown out to sea and landing in New York.

We had a "week out" after Birkenhead, which seemed such a pity, as none of the company intended to go to London, that I suggested a two-night visit to West Kirby on the principle of half-a-loaf being better than no bread, and after a "prospecting" visit we decided to run the risk, with the gratifying result that the half-loaf turned out to have quite a good sprinkling of currants.

I was allowed to go to town for two days on the distinct understanding that I was to return and show myself for two days in West Kirby before we played, a rumour having got about that I was not appearing,

though advertised, a trick which, we were informed, had been played there before.

That the rumour undoubtedly existed was speedily proved to me on my return to West Kirby in mid-week according to promise, for at the moment of my appearance for a round of golf at Hoylake the same afternoon I was greeted by more than one acquaintance with such remarks as: "You really are here then?"—"Going to perform in West Kirby?"—"That's good, we hardly liked to believe it." The last remark, seeming to imply a certain slur on this delightful little seaside resort, appeared to me to court an inquiry, the result of which was the disclosure of the name of a well-known artist who advertised an appearance and made no excuse whatever for failing to make it, leaving a hiatus in the cast very moderately filled by a substitute.

We had great trouble in adapting our full-sized scenery to the dimensions of the local hall, and in consequence each "strike and set" took more than double the usual time, with the result that it was past eleven before we came to the last act; I suggested that, to save time, we should play it in the same scene as Act 3, although it took place in another person's house; the management received my suggestion with acclamation, and a few words of explanation from me to the audience produced an evident feeling of relief at the prospect of an earlier release than expected, there being an evident intention to "see the thing through" at whatever cost.

The receipts were said to be the largest taken since

the hall was opened, with the usual exception (of course) of the annual amateur charity performance for the glorification of local budding talent.

Actors on tour become so accustomed to spending the major part of each Sunday in a train that my experience of the Sunday following West Kirby would perhaps hardly be regarded as phenomenal, but, to me, was something of a record.

We were due at Southport, and I left Kirby about nine-thirty to go, via Liverpool, to Formby Golf Club, where my old friends, Tait, Ralli and Wellman, were awaiting me for a four-ball match, after playing which I went in to Southport to dress, back to Liverpool for a very excellent dinner, then again to Southport, about eleven, for a bridge-party, which broke up at one-fifteen, this early hour being necessitated by a rehearsal at eleven the next morning; not a bad day for a veteran.

One of the married members of the company, whose wife was also playing in the piece, took advantage of a seaside week to have his little daughter with her nurse down, and also the "granny," and, with this small flotilla in tow, arrived at the rooms he had engaged; the landlady, it appeared, was somewhat unaccustomed to what she termed "theatricals" (a very frequent way of alluding to members of the profession), and had also had a somewhat exciting experience the week before, when her tenant was what she described as a "musical-comedy young woman," who had been visited by a large number of friends not too particular as to the length of their stay, and the cleaning of

whose boots she strongly resented. She at first refused to take my friend and his belongings in at all, in spite of the self-evident respectability of grandmother, nurse and child. It was the wife she had doubts of, and only gave way and admitted the party on receiving an indignant answer from the husband to her last question, "Will there be many gentlemen after your wife?"

There was a very jealous feeling among Southport residents and visitors just at this time, its object being Blackpool, its healthy rival, whose enterprising councillors had launched into the highly attractive (in both senses) speculation of an Aviation Week.

The great question was: "Why should not Southport, with its unrivalled foreshore, also have a fly?"—and party feeling ran higher than many of the airmen eventually succeeded in doing. Such a subject could not, of course, be neglected in my topical song, and I gave them a local aviation verse, the success of which was a recommendation to the airmen to fall, if they must fall, in the water—if they could find it? For a really (and deservedly) popular seaside resort I believe you will find less sea at Southport than anywhere else, but I fancy that is regarded as one of the features of its many attractions; and the artificial lake appears to more than counterbalance the deficiency, an additional joy being provided in the fragile-looking car, hung on a wire, in which you can be slung across it—if you like.

After so many weeks of "the simple life," the hospitality of my friends in Liverpool must have got

into my veins, with the result that I was impelled to give a supper-party at the very comfortable hotel at which I was staying.

With that spirit of delightful reciprocity which in my experience has never yet failed in the ladies of my profession, I found no difficulty in securing a supper partner for each of my male guests, and the result was one of those very cheery evenings which one does not soon forget.

The ladies left us at a discreet hour, and after a few rubbers of bridge we agreed that an early break-up was desirable, my friends being all *hommes d'affaires*, so accordingly about four-thirty we retired, all of us being very merry, and the most merry of all developing an exaggerated politeness which was highly amusing.

I was much struck with the firm announcements made as to the hour of the next morning's departure of these business men. Two of them declined to be sent off before noon, while the third was compelled to take the earliest train available, but when I came down to breakfast at eleven the virtuous one had not appeared, while the two confessed lie-a-beds had 'caught the train he had spoken of! This undoubtedly points to the fallacy of making overnight resolutions, and seems to place them in the same category with those of the New Year.

During the next Sunday's journey I attempted to give a lesson, to one or two of the company, on auction bridge, having played it at least once myself and knowing next to nothing of the game and

nothing of the rules; my partner was an otherwise very bright lady of the company, but to some extent lacking the card brain, who declined absolutely to realise the enormity of calling "one diamond" because she held the ace single. I happened to have enough to let us get our contract, which was fatal to her chance of ever learning the game, as whenever the incident was alluded to, as a "shocking example," she remarked triumphantly: "Well, it came off, old dear!"

While on the subject of bridge I cannot help wondering if I am alone in remarking an increase, or so it seems to me, in the number of players who seem compelled to discuss the playing of each hand with an acrimonious and dictatorial manner very much to be deprecated. Surely the possession of recognised skill does not warrant the giving of unsought instruction, especially when given in the manner I allude to, and when to this is added the aggravation of such instruction from the brains of a notoriously unqualified exponent, it becomes difficult to bear with equanimity. We are told that example is better than precept, but bad examples appear more easy of imitation than good, and it seems, to put it mildly, unfortunate that so many players are depriving themselves of their enjoyment rather than lay themselves open to the annoyance. Most golfers are strict in their observance of the etiquette of the game, and there is yet to be invented a game more trying to the temper, so why should we not have a printed work on the etiquette of bridge, which we

could place courteously in the hands of the transgressor.

In order to thoroughly realise that I was "on tour" I determined to try the experiment of "rooms" when in Cheltenham for the week, leaving the selection to Edwards, the Frobisher of the play, and Lambert Plummer, with whom I proposed a manly *ménage à trois*; we were waited on by one of the weirdest landlady's daughters I ever encountered, of a certain and uncertain age, a figure about which there was no uncertainty, a habit of wearing, at all hours, a large and dilapidated tam-o'-shanter. She informed us that her name was Mrs Paget, and that she was a widow, whereupon Plummer inquired genially if she were by any chance related to the "wicked Pagets"; she seemed to think she might be, and on the morning of our departure confided to Plummer that she undoubtedly was.

I had my first experience of being driven by a lady chauffeur this week, my cousin, Miss Faithfull, the principal of the Ladies College, being the artist, and evidently a very capable one; some of the residents whom we met on our tour of the town betrayed a certain surprise on recognising her companion, not being aware of our relationship, which amused us both greatly, as we could easily imagine them discussing the unwonted frivolity on the part of a lady of such a responsible position; however, I have not heard since that she has been asked to resign.

CHAPTER IX

TOURING—A MEMBER OF TATTERSALLS—FLYING MATINÉES—RINKING

From Cheltenham to Southend was a change which offered much food for reflection in various directions, even the trains in which we made the rather toilsome journey evidencing a sense of the transmutation from moderate luxury to the advisability of getting there somehow, in something with a none too prepossessing exterior and a pronounced lack of interior comfort.

A walk along the parade in a fairly fresh breeze appealed to me as the best vacuum-cleaner available, but I was scarcely prepared for the extraordinary *coram publico* manner in which the younger visitors and residents of the town devoted themselves to the commissariat department. I had never before seen, in so limited an area, such an astonishing number of babies as were here assembled, most of them of a very immature age, and all, without exception, bent on satisfying a very natural thirst in a beautiful natural manner.

The Southend mothers indubitably recognise the truth of the poet's dictum that there is no more beautiful thing to be seen than a mother suckling her child; but when the picture is presented *ad infinitum* the eye of a mere man becomes sated with

its beauty, turns introspective and awakens disturbing thoughts of future possibilities.

I discussed the subject with a friendly, if somewhat familiar, waiter at my hotel, and he informed me that I should have promenaded "the other cliff," where nothing of the kind obtains; his advice was sound, as I afterwards discovered, and during my stay I did not again trespass into the day-nursery.

The audiences here are, I was told, very appreciative, if rather critical, and our acting-manager strongly advised "no serious matter" in my sketch, but having carefully rehearsed a semi-serious song, interleaved, so to speak, with a few lines of spoken verse, I was not to be put off giving it, which I did in some trepidation, with the unexpected result of the serious portion of the number receiving the greater applause. One never knows!

Three nights and a matinée, it appears, exhaust the theatre-goers of Southend, so that this week brought me a strong reminder of my old "Entertainment" days in the shape of a weary journey on the Thursday from Southend to Tonbridge Wells, slightly solaced by an hour's wait at Liverpool Street, giving time for a visit to one of Sweetings' delightful houses for shellfish and appetising sandwiches of varied delicacies dear to the palates of the working bees in the city-hive.

In view of the storming of Tonbridge at some totally indefinite hour—it was only eleven o'clock then—Plummer and I provisioned our compartment with a consignment of shrimps and lobsters ("Actors

and fish," once again), which, on arrival, completed a menu such as an ostrich might have selected, consisting of the aforesaid shellfish, flanked with hot bacon and welsh-rarebits, and aided by a strong solution of Lager; certainly no ostrich could have felt better after a meal than did we after this one.

Tonbridge Wells will always dwell in my memory as being the place where, for the first time in my life, I won the prize in a raffle. As a matter of fact it was not "the" prize, but a consolation offered to the lowest throw of the dice, otherwise I think I should have retained my record; I should not have won this had it been anything I really wanted, and, as I could not very well take on tour a canary in a cage, I re-raffled it and handed the money to the stage-hands for drinks; I was horribly afraid I might win it again, but it was won by its former owner, the property-man, who was a bit of a humorist, and remarked on my winning it: "Well, guv'nor, I expect that's the first time you ever got the bird."

For the benefit of the uninitiated I will explain that "getting the bird" is theatricalese for being hissed. The expression is somewhat difficult of comprehension, but is, I presume, attributable to the unpopularity of the human with the goosebird; this has a subtle significance which may possibly account for the more modern manner of expressing disapproval, which is by "booing."

Every artist has, I imagine, experienced and suffered from that extraordining laugh which so closely resembles a hiss; I myself have frequently

been disturbed by it, but not of late years, and, in most cases at least, the artist has the consolation that expressions of disapproval are not levelled at him but at the author.

From "The Wells" we journeyed to Folkestone, where I had a great welcome at the hands of my old friend, George Grossmith, who has chosen it as a cheery and healthy place of retirement after long years of hard work. That he is by no means past work he demonstrated by accepting the task of composing the music for a song of mine written for George Giddens to sing in *The Merry Peasant*; it was never used by Giddens, and I never heard the reason why, but I have the song as a pleasant souvenir of association with my old comrade of the Savoy.

We had an addition to the company here, in the shape of a brother of Plummer, home on leave from "Cow-punching," who "walked on" in the ballroom scene, which afforded him so much amusement as to rank as "the time of his life," such is the glamour of the stage to the simple-minded backwoodsman.

Eastbourne is another town which fits into the same week with one of its neighbours, in this case Folkestone, and I was pleased to renew my acquaintance with the golf links which were the scene of my debut; they have been considerably changed since then, but some of the old holes still give me the feeling of being like a fly on a wall, so steep are the hills.

For some few weeks past we had had heavy additional work on our shoulders owing to the arrange-

IN "A MEMBER OF TATTERSALLS"

ment we had entered into to produce, in Brighton, an "entirely new and original" three-act comedy, which had been submitted to me as containing a part which might appeal to me—as it did, very strongly indeed.

One of the greatest difficulties in connection with the production was the imperative necessity for casting it among the members of our touring company, as otherwise it would have been next to impossible to adequately rehearse it.

The inevitable result of this condition was the presence of one or two square pegs in round holes, one part in particular requiring a stronger and older character actor than was included in the company. However, in spite of these little drawbacks, the task was attacked with the genuine enthusiasm invariably displayed by all players in exploiting new material by a new author, and the result was a performance which did not leave more to be desired than was inevitable, and in one or two directions proved better than was expected.

Not being unduly superstitious—I say "unduly" because experience tells me that superstition, genuine or assumed, is rampant among the members of my profession—we selected the Friday in the week for the productions of our bantling, which was called *A Member of Tattersalls.*

The prevalence of superstition amongst artists by no means implies a monopoly of the foolishness, if such it be; we have all heard people state: "I am not superstitious, but I would no more do such-and-

such a thing on a Friday than fly." The bridge player is not superstitious, but if he wins the deal invariably takes the winning seat; these examples might be continued *ad infinitum*, but two are sufficient to demonstrate that, while the ordinary person denies the accusation of being superstitious, the artist honestly admits it, and will beg of you, with the gravest face, not to whistle in a theatre, for fear of whistling yourself or someone else out of it. The superstition with regard to passing someone on the staircase is, as far as I can gather, only indulged in by members of the gentler sex, who will turn round and go back to the next landing sooner than run the risk; all inquiries as to the penalty involved by a breach of this superstition have hitherto proved fruitless, and, knowing the feminine capacity for retaining a secret, one is forced to the conclusion that the penalty must be non-existent, or at least innocuous to man.

Superstition of all kinds has always had a strong fascination for me. I am one of those who "do not believe" though I may practise, but being fully awake to the danger of letting my pencil run away with me (I use pens only for letters) I will end this digression with the statement that I have no particular dislike to Fridays, and was not unduly disturbed at that night being chosen for our production. It is of course possible that the local management selected this night as not supposed to be quite the best from a business point of view, but fully meeting the requirements of an experiment; if any

such idea existed it was most pleasantly dispelled by the fact of the receipts being larger than on any other night of the week, and the audience most gratifyingly enthusiastic.

The practice of a provincial production for a new play has at least one undoubted advantage—that of precluding any possibility of securing the presence in front of the kindly army of friends and wellwishers, invariably procurable in London, anxious to give a good send-off to author and players, and, as a natural consequence, providing a more genuine test of the prospects of the play, alike from the commercial and artistic points of view.

It was therefore very pleasant to find that, although we had a most friendly audience, it was not an audience of friends at the start, though wellwishers they probably were, and most decidedly became friends as the play progressed, and the character of the honest, straightforward old Book-maker, with his blundering but good-hearted efforts to secure the happiness of his only daughter, appealed to their sympathies, and found its way to their hearts.

One member of the audience, with whom I was slightly acquainted, paid me a visit at the end of the play, and said he "liked it immensely, and remembered seeing it in London!" He could hardly have read the programme, which he carried in this hand, for, as the result of careful and round-about questioning, I elicited the fact that he imagined he had assisted at a performance of *The Walls of Jericho*.

Although perhaps not very valuable as a proof of

discrimination on the part of the maker, this criticism was certainly a two-edged compliment to the new play; for while it was undoubtedly pleasing to have it mistaken for the best-known, and most deservedly popular, work of a tried author, it also indicated the existence of plagiarism, for which there was not a single iota of foundation.

The business for the week at Brighton suffered considerably in my estimation from that detestable modern invention (from the touring manager's point of view)—the flying matinée.

The custom, which has arisen of late years, of transporting a noted London success, bodily, for one afternoon, to certain towns near enough to allow of a return in time for the usual evening performance, does not, I venture to think, offer sufficient advantages to either the London or provincial management to warrant the continuance of the practice. The profit made by the former can hardly be held to compensate for the trouble taken, not to mention the inevitable fatigue to the artists engaged, which must have its effect in a less spontaneous performance in the more important locale where the play is running.

The local manager can, of course, reckon on at least one good house during the week, for which, however, he has to surrender a far larger percentage; but, in order to secure this house, he discounts the value of attraction of the touring company which he is sheltering for the week, and deliberately asks his clients to save their money for the one performance,

for which he usually doubles his prices. Another just grievance, which I think the touring manager has, lies in the fact that he finds the town ablaze with printing concerning the flying matinée, while his own modest appeals for patronage have, in some cases, to be sought for; also—it is the custom for the announcements of the following week's attraction to be put in evidence on the Thursday or Friday of the week before, while the flying matinée may be largely advertised and billed for some length of time previously, surely a manifestly unfair method of procedure. Of course, one may be told that the weekly attraction is in truth a weakly one, and hence the flying matinée to balance things, but who is to tell us whether it would not have been possible to secure a stronger attraction had the flying matinée not been seen hovering in the middle distance?

I am not holding a brief for or against any touring manager or provincial theatre, but only in the cause of "live and let live."

We are constantly being told of the difficulty actors have in securing a living wage, but the manager must perforce cut his coat according to his cloth, and I cannot but think the flying matinée a great factor in the reduction of the material, and one which, if persevered with, will, *ipso facto*, depreciate the efficiency of touring companies, through the inability of managers to pay such terms as are the legitimate demand of the competent artists.

This particular "flying matinée" was not, however, entirely without its pleasant feature to me; I under-

stood that my dressing-room would be required for use by one of the artists, and having carefully collected all my belongings, and stored them carefully on one table, I had them covered with a large dusting sheet, to which I pinned a note, requesting the occupier to "kindly refrain from disturbing them."

It was with no little pleasure and amusement that I found an answering note on my looking-glass that evening which read:

"DEAR MR BARRINGTON,—Many thanks for your room. In spite of great curiosity I have not even peeped! Yours sincerely, ELLIS JEFFRIES."

From sunny Brighton to breezy Blackpool was another contrast, our arrival being greeted with a strong gale of wind and heavy rains, both of which continued at intervals during the week. As the Aviation Festival was to take place the following week, faces began to get longer and longer in anticipation of failure, but luckily it was not realised.

Going home one night after work, I turned on to the front, and found myself facing the strongest wind I think I have ever experienced. Had it been gusty, walking would have been impossible, and it was only the steady force of it which allowed of any progression against it, and when I turned I was blown along at a pace which would have done credit to my old sprinting days.

The circumstance that fixed this particular gale in my memory was the marvellous effect it produced in

playing on and through The Tower; there was a deep, varying diapason note, like the groaning of some monster in distress, and above that a mighty rustling that one's fancy could easily imagine to be caused by the wings of a countless horde of demons let loose on a voyage of destruction; the combined effects of a cheery fire and hot supper being needed to convince that "the end was not yet."

An agreeable interlude to the austerities of this week was provided by the presence of my old friend Vere Clay Ker Seymer, who was the organiser for the Aviation Week. We had supper together on several occasions at the Tower Restaurant, where the cooking left nothing to be desired, and where he was to be found on most evenings surrounded by a crowd of genial and admiring aldermen and town councillors, drinking in the words of wisdom he let fall, to a liquid accompaniment of their own choosing. Vere, as is well known, is an excellent raconteur, and one of his efforts, I remember, amused the aldermanic entourage immensely; his uncle, Cecil Clay, was playing bridge at a "mixed" party, and at a late hour, when breaking up was discussed, a very charming lady announced that, having only won two pounds ten, she was not going to bed, whereupon Clay remarked: "A most praiseworthy resolution. I shall be happy to make it a fiver!"

I went as usual during the week for a round or two of golf at St Anne's, and on one occasion proved to my companion's satisfaction that all railway servants are not as smart as they might wish us to

believe; we had third-class tickets, and on the return journey, owing to the crowded state of the train, we travelled second. The collector demanded excess, which my friend paid, but as, for some reason, I had not parted with the "outward" half of my ticket, I pointed out to him that in getting a whole ticket it must cover any excess due—it puzzled him for a moment, but he eventually saw the justice of it, and retired minus the excess.

My companion, having paid, felt that he had been defrauded, but the next day he had his revenge, as, having taken both our tickets, he informed me on the return journey that he had lost mine. I therefore had to pay, and it never occurred to me till later to ask how he knew that it was my ticket and not his own that was lost.

I paid my first visit to an Aerodrome here, and was much impressed with the space required and the enormous sheds built for the machines, but lost interest to a great extent on finding that none of the latter had arrived—in fact one propeller, unattached, was all that was in evidence to gratify the curiosity of some hundreds of confiding trippers — myself among the number—who had paid their hardly earned shillings of entrance money.

Why is it that, whatever may be your point of departure, a journey to Leeds invariably creates a feeling of depression? It is a thoroughly hospitable town, and a good entertainment never fails in attracting large and appreciative audiences, and yet one views a visit with a certain amount of apprehension.

Having received a hint of an existing predilection for strong fare I substituted one of my old Coliseum scenas for the musical entertainment, and my old friend *The Tramp* emerged from his retirement with some success.

Another old friend also appeared during the week, in the person of Cyril Maude, who was at the rival house with *The Flag Lieutenant*, and I took advantage of a matinée to see the play for the first time. I enjoyed it thoroughly, especially the scene of the great fight, and was much impressed with the power of the Admiral to countermand a court martial at his discretion.

Blackburn was a town which I had never previously visited and which afforded me agreeable surprises in several ways. One of these was my first experience in rinking—that is, up-to-date rinking, as I was one of its early martyrs in the boom of—well—some years ago. My skates on this occasion ran away with me better than I did with them, and the sight of a sweet little girl of some five years of age cutting figures of eights, threes and sixteens, with all the airs and graces of a St Moritz champion, so impressed me with the lack of distinction about my own figures of fifty (odd) that I speedily arrived at the conclusion that rinking was not my forte, and I have sternly discouraged any further efforts.

I was confirmed in this resolve by witnessing a rink hockey match, in which the outdoor costume seemed ridiculously out of place and the attitudes of the players on a par with the dress.

There can be no doubt that the overwhelming popularity of this amusement largely affected for some time the prosperity of the provincial theatres, but, partly owing to the plethora of rinks, and possibly greatly to the monotony of the exercise, there are not wanting signs of the waning of the affections of its devotees; it may possibly revive with the invention of a skate or floor which will mitigate the fiendish noise, which the efforts of an even excellent orchestra, conspicuous by its rarity, only seems to accentuate.

Another agreeable surprise was the manner in which my little sketch and songs were received by audiences which I had been given to understand were only influenced by the "dramatic touch," and here again the pleasure found its concomitant pain in a remark made by a casual acquaintance who informed me that he had taken his "missus" to the play and that while she had thoroughly enjoyed it she had quite failed to see "what the prologue had to do with it!" I began to wonder if people ever read their programmes, and on putting that question to the local manager in one of the towns we visited he told me that a large percentage of his patrons never took programmes, but gathered all the information they thought necessary from the advertisement hoardings. And yet we are told that we are not a thrifty nation!

CHAPTER X

SWINDON AND HUNTING—TORQUAY AND ONIONS—PAIGNTON AND "PIRATES"

One of the penalties of touring with a piece that has been played almost everywhere presents itself in the necessity for avoiding certain towns where it has either been seen too often or too lately to render another visit advisable, even though it may be the only stepping stone to the next Eldorado, and it is this penalty which brings in its train the infliction of some of those wild flights from north to south, and *vice versa*, of which the column "On the Road" in *The Referee* every Sunday affords such frequent proof.

Our Blackburn to Dalston jaunt was a case in point, mitigated to a great extent by the prospect of living at home for a whole week, a joy which had some of the edge taken off it by the circuitous and lengthy route involved in the practice of this domestic virtue.

It was my first experience of this suburb, and I was much struck with the courtesy of an absolute stranger who greeted me by name on the station platform, surmised that it was my first visit and insisted on showing me the way to the theatre, which I found was just outside the station; I smelt

an autograph hunter, but was wrong: it was only the desire of an old Savoy admirer to have speech with one of the admired.

There was an old gentleman in the front row of the stalls at the matinée—a position I was told that he occupies at every matinée of every play—with a magnificent laugh which infected the rest of the house so delightfully that it would be worth the while of any management to secure his attendance *in perpetuo* at a decent salary, but on the other hand this might mean putting an extinguisher on his enjoyment, it being a notorious fact that "deadheads" very rarely consider that they are getting value for the money they have not expended.

There was a peculiar system of "Benefit Tickets" in use here, which was explained to me at some length by our manager, but which I entirely failed to comprehend, except in so far as grasping the facts that it meant a considerable difference, against us, in the accounts, and that the buyers of these tickets would not have been there if they had not bought them—which may be probable if not obvious.

From Dalston we journeyed to another suburb, of a somewhat more open aspect, called Swindon, where our efforts to amuse met with a responsive enthusiasm entirely out of proportion with the size of the audiences.

It is perfectly true that an appreciative audience, however small, is a great incentive, but an irritating frequency of this great incentive is apt to become also a trifle monotonous, and had it not been for

some delightful experiences outside the town it is just possible that we might have regarded Swindon with a certain amount of disfavour.

These experiences were chiefly derived from days with the Badminton Hunt and the V.W.H., Swindon being an excellent centre for both packs.

On the Tuesday, Plummer and I put in a very strenuous day, the meet of the V.W.H. was at Haylane Wharf, which we were told was "about three miles out." It turned out to be a good four, and we just missed the meet, however we "nicked in" later on; had lots of fun over hills and through some very thorny hedges and eventually saw three kills, one of them taking place in a pond, which I believe is rather exceptional; all three foxes were bolted out of a drain, and the third, a big dog fox, might have given a good run with a little more law allowed him. Four miles out and four back, not to mention the hunting, formed a capital *hors d'œuvre* for a short nap, a long steak, and the play as a savoury.

The next day, by way of a rest, we strolled out to historic Wrougton, to lunch with my old friend Arthur Gordon, the well-known gentleman rider and trainer, where after lunch we proceeded to pass criticism of a totally uninspired nature on the horses under his charge. One of our party took the prize in this connection by remarking, "that's a likely-looking colt your man is exercising," to which our host replied: "Ah, that's rather a novelty you are looking at—he's a six-year-old being broken!"

Thursday found us at Wootton Bassett for a meet of

the Duke of Beaufort's hounds, and even the uninitiated eye could not fail to be struck with their quality and also that of the mounts of the hunt servants, the horse Dale was riding looking as if he might be trained to win a Grand National.

We had the great good luck to see a lovely piece of hound work from our vantage point of the top of the hill at Vasterne, where they found, and went away across the canal, when he turned right-handed, doubled back, crossed the canal again, through a large woodyard, and then held right away behind us. There were three checks, and it was beautiful to see the hounds working and picking up the line again, we having the fox in view all the time; after the third they streamed over the railway, and, as a matter of course, there was a train passing, but the driver saw them in time, and stopped till every hound was safe over (I could almost hear the language used by an indignant passenger who disapproved of hunting, though the train was half-a-mile away) and the last we saw of them was when, after leaving the wood-pile, they were going at a tremendous bat up the meadows at the back of us, with the fox in view, towards Cliffe Pyford, where, we heard later on, they lost him, but after wandering about for two or three hours, attracted in different directions by the distant music of the pack, and eventually giving it up, we were passing Vasterne on our way to the station when we saw a very tired fox, which I fully believe was the one they had been hunting, stealing up a hedgerow towards the covert,

HIS GRACE THE DUKE OF BEAUFORT

having gallantly saved his brush for a future occasion.

By the courtesy of the Duke of Beaufort I am enabled to publish the photograph which accompanies this chapter, the original of which will remain a pleasant souvenir of a most enjoyable outing, and one which will go far to reconcile me to another professional visit to Swindon should opportunity offer.

Two of the ladies of the company were out with us this day, and Miss Trevor Lloyd, who knew the country, having ridden to hounds herself at one time, was almost more than my match as a foot-follower, but then, as I pointed out, she was hardly such a weight-carrier as myself.

Friday saw us out again with the V.W.H. at Minety Old Inn, a most delightfully picturesque little spot, but it was a poor day's sport, consisting chiefly of bucketing about the roads, the monotony of which was, however, in my case, greatly relieved by the presence of the charming wife of an old friend who gave me a seat in a "tub" whch had just room for our two selves and lunch, but I fancy that my presence was resented by the well-fed pony who drew us, though she ought to have been friendly, being known as Santoi; possibly she felt hurt at an injudicious comparison I made between her figure and that of Florence Collingbourne, the original Santoi; but that something had ruffled her usually quiet nature was undoubtedly the case, for when I was standing at her head, holding the bridle, while hounds

were drawing a covert, she made a determined effort to lunch off my arm, and in being denied the eagerly sought delicacy became so unruly that I was unable to hold her, much to the amusement of my hostess's little daughter, who presented a very pretty picture riding astride of her hunter, and who inquired if the original Santoi had expressed her dislike in the same manner.

She (the pony) took her revenge by delaying so long when the hounds at last found that we were "thrown out," and I left to walk to the station, when she started to carry her mistress home with a dash which said plainly: "Good-bye to you, Mr Incubus!"

By way of getting comfortably from Swindon to Exeter, our next town, I went to London by a rather early train on the Sunday morning. While waiting on the platform I attracted a certain amount of interest on the part of local inhabitants who had seen me at the theatre during the week, but on the arrival of the train I was completely overshadowed by the presence of Winston Churchill, fresh from his encounter with the suffragette's whip at Bristol, who appeared at the window of his carriage in search of Sunday papers. It was rather gratifying to have the proof offered that the stage is not the only profession the members of which possess the human desire to read their "notices."

A wonderful non-stop run from London to Exeter impresses one greatly with the improved conditions of travelling, but there is always the crumpled rose-

leaf, I imagine, and in this case it presented itself in the poor quality of the lunch provided on board. It seems a great pity that the catering is not restricted to a well-selected and well-cooked joint, or cutlets, or chickens, which I firmly believe would be more appreciated by the consumers than the present rather pretentious effort at a four-course meal, some portion of which is bound to suffer, if only on account of the limited space of the cuisine, but, after all, perhaps this is hypercritical when one remembers what the journey meant in—say, only fifteen years ago.

There is another weird device in use at the theatre here, to make sure of a good audience on the Monday night, always, I admit, a desirable object, which takes the form of "Shareholders' Night," the privilege to these fortunates being that of going into any part of the house at half-price. They were very much in evidence on that night, but I failed to observe any pronounced efforts on their part to swell their dividends by further appearances, which suggested a doubt as to the efficiency of the scheme: we naturally could not ascribe it to our want of power to amuse. It is a charming little theatre, excellently managed, and a delightful old town to visit, but it always seems a pity to work at a loss, as we did, in spite of the fact that the business was the best done for some time, and possibly it may be true, as I was told, that the townspeople have not yet forgotten the terrible disaster which overtook the old house; it is to be hoped that this feeling will wear off, and the theatre resume its former popularity.

The Guildhall is quite one of the sights of the place, and is well worth visiting, its age being lost in the vista of years, the earliest known thing about it is its being restored in 1536! The custodian of the place gave us the usual guide-book information, and was in grave doubt as to whether I should not visit the dungeons after I had insisted on occupying the Judge's bench, and singing the Judge's song from *Trial by Jury*, with Plummer as "the crowd in court."

Mr Richards, the genial chairman of the board at the theatre, gave us a delightful day at Budleigh Salterton, a capital golf-course with ideal surroundings, and we wound up the week with a meet of the Devon and Somerset foxhounds at the beautiful little village of St Mary's Clyst—where for the first time within my recollection I was photographed by accident, knowing nothing of it until the operator came to the theatre with a proof, he himself having found out by chance that I was standing close to the hounds when he took them. It was a pleasant souvenir of an interesting day, but disconcerting to find that my attitude and expression were calculated to give the impression that I was stage-managing the whole hunt.

On arriving at Torquay the following Sunday, without having made previous arrangements for due lodgment, I yielded to the kindly persuasions of Plummer and his cow-punching brother to accompany them to the rooms they had booked, and ascertain if an extra bedroom was available. We had spent a very cheery week under the same roof

at Exeter, and it was only an unwonted display of tact on my part, caused by the reflection that, in view of his approaching departure, the brothers might like to be alone together, which had suggested a temporary dissolution of partnership. I therefore yielded, as gracefully as my figure would permit, to their invitation, but on the opening of the massive front door of their joint residence we were greeted with such a positively overwhelming reek of onions as to cause us all to fall back some feet in a panic of dismay, and force me to recognise the advisability of reconnoitring elsewhere. It was then only ten-thirty, we having come by an early train for this purpose, and the brothers kindly came to help in my search, during which hour conversation naturally turned on the heinous offence of saturating other people's apartments with a powerful odour of a possibly unwelcome nature. Plummer was particularly emphatic in his condemnation of the proceeding, until he suddenly remembered that he, as caterer-in-chief, had ordered the onions himself. This, of course, put an entirely new aspect on the affair, "the obnoxious reek" transmuted itself automatically into "an appetising smell," and finally, having disposed of myself and my belongings in a harbour of refuge elsewhere, I returned to their abode to render what assistance I could in the demolishing of the excellent fare which accompanied the delicious vegetable.

Having made a solemn vow to practise the virtue of economy, I determined that a light tea would be sufficient sustenance for the rest of the day, but the

solitariness of my rooms, after the cheery companionship of the preceding week, combined with the early hour at which we had gathered the onions, drove me forth to seek the solace of a late dinner at a hotel.

With my vow still reproaching me, as it were, with my weakness, I ordered a modest pint of burgundy with the *diner à prix fixe* of five shillings (the only available meal) and proceeded as usual to enjoy the book I was then reading without paying any attention to the waiter until I required a drink, when I found my glass filled with hock. I called him and drew his attention to the mistake and he asserted that the number I had ordered was the wine he had brought; having no particular objection to hock I said no more, but I felt a certain annoyance, which was increased on finding it charged on the bill at five shillings and sixpence. I have a suspicion that it was the last pint of a wine which was seldom called for and of which they were anxious to be rid. Thus was my vow broken for me by a waiter, and in sheer distress at the fact I committed the further lapse of an eighteenpenny cigar, coffee and liqueur, and returned to my rooms with the mixed sensations of millionairism and gross extravagance.

The contiguity of Paignton naturally brought to my memory the recollection that it was the scene of the first and copyright performance of Gilbert and Sullivan's opera, *The Pirates of Penzance*, in which the part of Sergeant of Police was played by my old friend Fred Billington, who is, as a matter of fact, still playing it with Mrs Carte's repertoire company

in the provinces. The part fell to me when the piece was done in London, and I felt a keen interest in visiting the locale of its birth at the Bijou Theatre, Paignton, but to my dismay I could find no trace of any such theatre. Having secured the attention of "the oldest inhabitant" I elicited the fact that "he thought he'd heard on plays being given at the old hotel yonder," and sure enough, on inquiring of the courteous and hospitable landlord, Mr Webb, I was shown what remained of the Bijou Theatre, in former times the only place of entertainment in the little town.

The stage has been converted into a billiard-room, and folding-doors shut it off from what was the tiny auditorium, but to my surprise there was no commemorative tablet to be seen recording the honour the little room had received, an omission, however, which Mr Webb declared he should speedily rectify.

Several members of our company being with me, including Miss Trevor Lloyd, who has sung several of the soprano parts in these operas, we gave an excerpt from the *Pirates* in the shape of the chorus of Police, she representing Mabel and I the entire police force, and other friends filling in the bits they knew, and, according to my intimate knowledge of the music, the bits they did not.

It was a joyous quarter of an hour, and greatly amused the landlord and his entire staff, among whom was the inevitable old waiter, who might have been present at the copyright performance, and who evidently thought us a parcel of lunatics.

One of the ladies of the company gave a little supper that night to mark the occasion, the menu of which, though original, required a certain amount of bravery to tackle at midnight, consisting as it did of hare soup, hot-pot liberally sprinkled with mushrooms, a very alcoholic trifle, and a special *cuveé* of lager, demi-chaud. There were some "heads" the next morning, and fortunately no rehearsal necessitated early rising, but I am convinced that the climate of Torquay, while perhaps inducing it, is by no means suited to high living.

CHAPTER XI

MARKETING—RUGGER—"FAITHFUL JAMES"—BURNLEY

ONE of the charms of living in apartments when on tour is undoubtedly to be found in the necessary marketing, or perhaps it might be more accurately described as "shopping," there being very few men, I fancy, who possess more than the vaguest idea as to what they ought to pay for provend. Plummer was a greater adept in the art than I, and would frequently head me off from some delicacy which had caught my eye, generally in a fishmonger's, and which at the same moment had appealed to his nose. The only article in the purchase of which I would brook no interference was bacon, and to obtain this concession I had to bribe him by allowing him to buy a bottle of some very pungent and much advertised sauce, which I simply detested, and of which he partook so sparingly that three parts of the bottle travelled with us for several weeks, and was finally used by a mistaken landlady as a hair-wash.

I do not wish to draw any comparison on the intellectual qualities of the different species of shop assistants, but it was forcibly brought to my notice that grocers must be an eminently observant type, for in at least four towns which I had never before visited I was greeted, at the conclusion of my

purchases, with the remark. "What address, Mr Barrington?" This never failed to tickle the infinitesimal strain of conceit which we are told is a universal attribute of the theatrical profession, and did much to restore the balance of self-respect which the frequent indifference of the landlady to the most genuine pretensions had severely shaken.

One of the strongest characteristics of theatrical landladies is their garrulity, which, combined with the almost invariable familiarity they display, is occasionally rather irritating.

A habit to which I am much addicted when absorbing a lonely meal is that of reading a book, and I was once driven nearly to distraction while revelling in one of Cosmo Hamilton's delightful stories, at breakfast, by a talkative landlady (they don't do it so much at dinner—possibly because I usually dined out), who would insist on telling me about all the Gilbert and Sullivan operas in which she had seen me play; as a matter of fact she had never seen me at all: I had never before been to the town in question, and she was mistaking me for my old friend of the D'Oyly Carte Company, Fred Billington.

From Torquay to Newport, Monmouth, was another striking illustration of the value of contrast in promoting that equable temperament so invaluable to the touring actor. Here is no lovely bay surrounded with purple madder cliffs bathed in the opalescent glories of the setting sun, the faint blue haze of smoke curling upwards from farm and cottage, in the still air, as emblems of peace and rest. In

their places we have the far-reaching and impressive docks, the forest of red funnels in place of the cliffs, the black reek of smoke which tells of approaching departure as the mighty engines strain at the leash of their massive chain cables, amid the almost deafening intermittent roar of the coal as it is poured into the insatiable maw of these sea-going monsters.

If at Torquay you sleep, at Newport you must wake, and be up and doing if you would hold your own, not to mention a bit of theirs.

As a slight proof of the alertness of the residents I will instance the case of a lady and her daughter, strangers to me, who, desirous of securing my autograph, had called at several hotels and the theatre, all to no purpose, and finally ran me to earth in the main street, laden with market produce which I was carrying home.

The album and a pen and ink were straightway produced, and I was compelled to stand and deliver, which I did while the pretty daughter held the groceries and the sweet biscuits. Fortunately the bloaters were to be delivered by cart.

Newport is nothing if not energetic, and even football seems a more strenuous game here than elsewhere, so much so that after years of allegiance to the soccer game, as being the better to look on at, my preference was considerably undermined on witnessing a great match between Newport and Swansea, old and keen antagonists.

Through the courtesy of Mr Dauncey, a prominent official of the club, I was enabled to see Newport

maintain their unbeaten record, and the match was such a revelation to me of the possibilities of the game, to which I had been a stranger for many years, that I have since taken every opportunity of witnessing first-class matches.

The majority of the team occupied stalls at the theatre the same evening, at our invitation, but their presence was not an unmixed blessing, we on the stage being curious to observe the heroes of the fray, the heroes themselves being chiefly occupied in reading what the evening papers said of the match and their individual efforts, and the rest of the audience devoting the major part of their attention to the heroes.

During our week in Blackburn the manager of the theatre in Burnley came over and was so much pleased with our programme as to invite us to go to him for the week including New Year's Day, which we agreed to do. This left a hiatus of three weeks after finishing at Newport, which was very kindly filled in for me at the Tivoli by my ever-courteous friends Mr Sutton and Mr Tozer. I chose for this appearance an old one-act comedy by B. C. Stephenson called *Faithful James*, which I was able to cast and rehearse among the company on tour, so that we left Newport on the Sunday and opened at the Tivoli without a break, on the following Monday.

This little comedy went so extremely well that I fondly imagined I had at last found my "golden egg" for the halls, but I was once again doomed to disappointment, the managerial verdict being that

there was not enough of me in the piece to make it a "star turn"; I believe that what they really want is a twenty-five-minute version of *The Mikado*, but I have some diffidence in approaching Sir William Gilbert with such a suggestion.

This engagement gave us breathing space to rehearse one or two new-comers who were to play in *Jericho* for the Burnley week, and our doing so on the stage of the Tivoli, very kindly lent by the management, excited a little wonder on the part of stray spectators as to what kind of sketch for the halls it was that had four acts.

One of the spectators was a stage hand whom I had known for years, and who invariably displayed a most friendly interest in my work. I noticed him wearing a somewhat anxious expression, and on asking the cause of it was met with the inquiry, made in a most sympathetic tone: "Well, guv'nor, I like wot I've 'eard of it very much—but—wot about the time limit?"

One of the new ladies, engaged in *James* and being considered for *The Walls*, a very charming and sympathetic little actress, had some rather quaint notions as to the obligations of a contract, having on one occasion granted herself a three weeks' leave of absence because "her garden needed attention," and on another because "spring was coming and she must go home and look after her daffodils!" These derelictions from duty she herself confessed, but as there did not seem much scope for gardening operations in Burnley during the limited period of

one week she was engaged for the part which required filling, and of which she gave an excellent performance. I must also do her the justice to say that, when I returned from Burnley to a three weeks' engagement at the Pavilion, once more with *Faithful James*, she was never once absent, nor did she express the faintest hint of an interest in horticultural pursuits. I had some trouble in casting the part of an irascible Admiral for this engagement, finally securing an excellent actor, who was, however, more at home in "costume" plays, and found some difficulty in adapting his cultivated dignity of diction and gesture to the *prestissimo agitato* method required on the halls. That he succeeded in doing so proved him an actor of resource, but I think he never fully overcame the reluctance with which he wore, through the exigencies of the play, a very battered and dilapidated tall hat, with which he could not, with all his resource, accomplish the recognised high-comedy salutation.

I had a charming illustration, during this engagement, of the ready manner in which artists on the music-hall stage will come forward to help a brother or sister player out of an impasse. A member of my company had made a mistake of a whole hour in the time fixed for our sketch at a matinée and, having naturally sent no word, we were all left wondering what had happened and what to do. In the meantime our "turn" arrived, and was readily filled by other artists, among whom were Miss Vesta Victoria, who most kindly sang an extra song, on being in-

formed that the missing man had arrived, and would be ready in two minutes, just as I was suggesting to the stage manager that I had better do a single turn with a piano.

I was extremely grateful to Miss Victoria, and said so, for, apart from the pleasure of hearing her additional song, I will admit that the prospect of giving a sketch at the piano disguised as an elderly and artful-looking waiter did not appeal to me very forcibly.

Songs and sketches at a piano form a class of entertainment over which I have never been able to "enthuse" to any great extent, even when given by the very best exponents—a feeling which naturally militates against a personal production of the airy and dashing manner which seems so necessary to bring these items to a successful issue.

The archness and vivacity of the feminine exponents of this form of art are, of course, extremely acceptable, as being attributes of the sex for which one looks, but when exploited by a "mere man" scarcely possess the same attraction.

The frequency with which our anticipations of a pleasure to come fail to materialise has an echo in the fewer occasions on which a pleasurable realisation is not expected, a notable example of which, to me, was our visit to Burnley.

For one thing the town was very much excited over the forthcoming election, when a close fight was regarded as a certainty, and a possible victory for the Conservative candidate anticipated in what had

formerly been a hot-bed of radicalism. I notice that I have written "conservative" with a capital "C" and "radicalism" with a small "r"—an unconscious indication of my political tendencies. By way of doing what I could for the cause, I made a practice of holding talks with "the man in the street" whenever I could find one with the leisure to stand and gaze at the electoral picture posters which plastered the walls. The term "picture" posters is somewhat of a misnomer, for the glaring crudites of these works of art, both in colour and drawing, in many cases invited ridicule instead of sympathy, but nevertheless I presume they were not without effect, in view of the final triumph of Mr Arbuthnot, who was also singularly fortunate in having the assistance of such energetic canvassers as his wife and Sir John and Lady Thursby.

It was a great disappointment when our candidate failed to retain his seat at the celebrated Budget election of December 1910, and, while I do not for one moment suggest that the loss of my assistance as a canvasser affected the result in the slightest degree, I take pleasure in the fact that he was elected within a few days of my visit, during which I was as conspicuous in my absence from any meetings as I was from the town itself on the later occasion.

We had a very pleasant and amusing luncheon one day during the week, at Ormerod Hall, during which all election topics were taboo, the punishment for breach of the rule being something that

fitted the crime, as Gilbert put it, and it was very odd how anyone on the brink of an indiscretion immediately became troubled with a cough. The moment lunch was over the canvassing recommenced over the telephone, while Sir John and I left for a drive over the moors in a car, a Scotch plaid and a Scotch mist. Within a mile or two of Burnley's smoky chimneys we were out on the moors, and the car put up the first brace of grouse I had ever seen, except at the poulterer's or on the table, and at the moment I honestly thought I preferred them on the moor.

The mist had developed into a strong resemblance to a sea fog, and when we turned for home at the keeper's cottage—being stopped by a wall of it, the fog, I mean—I wondered how he knew where he was, and ever found his way into the town.

The natives of Burnley I found most friendlily disposed, and one of them on one occasion embarrassingly so. It was a very wet night and, having ordered a cab to take me home after work, I offered a lift to three of the ladies who lived near me. They accepted, and whether the sense of responsibility proved too much for the horse, or for what other reason will never be known, at the bottom of a hill, which he should have ascended, he preferred to break a shaft and assume a recumbent attitude on the road—I am not sure that the awful granite setts with which the town is paved are entitled to the definition "road," but let that pass (I trust for some time)—at all events there we were, and had to remain while the cabman

mended both the shaft and the horse with pieces of string. During the proceedings I naturally lowered the window to look out for a moment, when I observed a lady, in the national costume of clogs and shawl (and other garments, I believe), taking a great interest in the operations. As soon as she saw me she approached the window, whereupon I modestly withdrew my head, when, actuated by an evident desire to help in some way, she put her head right inside the carriage and murmured: "Are ye a lone man?" in a most sympathetic voice. The expression of her face on seeing the three ladies in the cab was delightfully quaint, being a mixture of surprise and reproof, but their silence must have alienated her sympathy, for she left hurriedly, whereupon the three ladies plied me with the most puzzling and pertinent questions as to the meaning of the incident, utterly declining to accept my explanation that her action was prompted by pure friendship.

In many cases it is the surest way to earn the discredence of the fair sex by asserting the absolute truth, but in this instance they were perhaps right, one of them even mischievously suggesting that I had used a superfluous adjective.

New Year's Eve we all felt should be celebrated in some manner, and a committee—consisting of Hanworth, Browning, Edwards, Plummer and myself—was appointed to "see what could be done." The first obvious step was to interview the proprietor of a good hotel with a view to supper, with merriment and late hours to follow; he was soon found, and

agreed to do all we required if we could content ourselves with what his head waiter described as "a cold calculation." I have heard it called "cold collection," before now, but never "calculation," but to prove that he meant it he repeated it several times.

The next consideration was the presents, and here I called in the assistance of one of the ladies, with excellent results; the only gift costing more than twopence was a little tin engine (fourpence) for the manager, chosen in view of the fact that in arranging our journeys he had proved himself a walking Bradshaw. The hero of the play, having returned from Australia, had of course a box of woolly sheep, and the whole company were suitably "gifted," much to their amusement.

The reason for a cold calculation being imperative was that the staff of the hotel was being indulged with its annual ball, in which we all joined after supper, and feeling that I owed the staff a debt for their complaisance I conscripted our men for their ladies and personally conducted a quadrille with a delightful cook as my partner.

There was one very weird dance, called, I fancy, the Military Two Step, which I danced with a pretty little woman who acted as our wardrobe-mistress, and which I fancied I was rather good at until she asked me to stop and told me that I knew nothing about it; feeling a little hurt I handed her over to one of the company who I knew could not dance, by way of revenge, but she afterwards told me "he was

first rate," which made me wonder what I could have been.

I overheard a remark of one of the stage hands one night to the effect that he "couldn't quite make out this company—they're all ladies and gentlemen," which rather pleased me, but unfortunately, immediately after making it, he very clumsily trod on the gown of one of the ladies, with disastrous results to a beautiful lace overskirt, and a very excusable "damn" was launched at him; whether our pretensions to gentility had annoyed, as well as puzzled, him, I do not know, but the "reproof" was received with a smile of pleasure which plainly said "now I know where I am!"

CHAPTER XII

CAMBRIDGE "RAGGING" — CIRCUITOUS ROUTE MARCHING—IRELAND

FEBRUARY 1910 sees me once more "on the road," once more with *Jericho* and once more with practically the same company. Cambridge was our starting point this time, and during the three days of our stay the "men" did everything in their power to give us a good time in every way. Plummer and I were again room-mates, and on our arrival found a note awaiting us, almost in the form of a Royal Command, to the effect that we were expected to dine with the writer, one MacCormick, a nephew of his, and a most excellent dinner it was too, conceived and executed in a lavish spirit, the sole note of parsimony struck being the restriction of choice in the matter of liqueurs to eight!

I had only once before been to Cambridge, some years ago, when my nephew, Rutland F. Cumberleye, was playing in the Varsity rugger team, when I had the same cheery welcome, but this was to be my first experience of play-acting to them, and a very pleasant one it proved. There was just a moment of wonder on my part as to whether our friendly relations were to be maintained in their integrity when the curtain went up on the Saturday

night, discovering me at the piano prepared for song and story, and I was greeted by a stentorian voice from the stalls, proceeding, I believe, from Brown of Clare, asking: "How are you, old Sport?" I was much touched at this proof of a kindly anxiety as to my health tendered by an absolute stranger, and gratefully replied: "Very well indeed. How are you, young Blood?"—a little interchange of compliments which seemed to vastly amuse the rest of the audience. Whether this proved the signal for opening the floodgates of conversation, or whether it was the usual mode of procedure, I do not know, but there followed a stream of interrogations and remarks, during my stories, to all of which I replied, fortunately without losing the thread of my discourse, culminating in one of my auditors (who had evidently been present the evening before), on my commencing a certain story, very kindly and promptly announcing the point. I very sweetly recommended him to take a turn outside, as he had heard it, advice which was backed up by the rest of his *confrères* in the stalls, and this *soiree conversationale* then closed with honours easy.

This disposition to "rag" the performers has been, I am told, handed down as *de rigeur* from prehistoric days, and, if met in the good-humoured way in which it is meant, is quite an addition to the pleasure of the evening, but there have been cases where the artist has resented it, with disastrous results to the entire performance.

I addressed a letter to the editor of the *Granta*,

on the subject, which was published on the following Saturday together with some sympathetic editorial remarks, and I heard later on a rumour to the effect that the "powers that be had seriously considered the advisability of putting the theatre out of bounds"; it has not been done, however, and would have been not only a serious mistake, but a great deprivation to undergraduates and play-actors anxious to make an exhaustive study of mutual characteristics.

Much depends upon the mood in which the victim of ragging may chance to be; there is naturally no time in which to think that personal remarks suddenly flung at you may be, in fact, generally are, the ebullition of youth and good-nature—in most cases that is—for there have been occasions when offence was meant and taken—and happy is he who, as in my instance, feels fit and well, recognises the procedure as the outcome of irresponsible frivolity, and is equal to the occasion; he is absolutely sure to command the sympathy and attention of the "raggers" for the remainder of the evening, but should anything have chanced to bring him to his work in a bad humour, and he indulge in the "retort discourteous," woe betide his possibility of a hearing!

After this amusing experience, I was curious to observe the behaviour of these light-hearted young bloods on leaving the theatre, and, as the part I was playing made its final exit in Act III., I was able to dress and patrol the opposite side of the street; I was at once struck with the fact that there were at least three sets of proctors and bull-dogs on duty, and

pulling down my cap, and turning up the collar of my coat, I did my best to invite their attention by my suspicious loitering, but, to my great chagrin, to no purpose.

The crowd shortly streamed out of the theatre, and it was quite entertaining to watch lighted pipes being thrust into pockets and remnants of black cloth, simulating gowns, being assumed at sight of the authorities. I had the satisfaction of seeing one uproarious young gentleman proctorised, but his was not a case of too much theatre, as he came from the opposite direction, and was too elaborately dignified to attempt escape, and so robbed me of the treat I desired, that of seeing the bull-dogs give chase.

The number of tea-parties we crowded into the three days, as well as the cakes we were expected to demolish at each, was something astounding, and enabled one to realise why the permission given to all pastrycooks' assistants to eat as much as they like, is not so recklessly extravagant or hospitable as it sounds.

From Cambridge to Hastings we travelled in very roundabout manner through some six or seven counties in order not to leave a certain railway system which had promised us in return to furnish a special train some three weeks later on to enable us to catch a boat for Ireland after working on the Saturday night; this was reasonable enough, but as it had already been settled that we should not travel by that particular boat, and therefore not need the

special train, the circuitous route was a superfluity of consideration.

What a totally different aspect such intensely "summer" towns as Hastings present in the winter! —nowhere to go, nothing to do, and very little to see, with the exception of a professor who made a shivery dive from the pier-head twice daily.

We were busy rehearsing one morning when two ladies came to inspect the seats they wished to book in the balcony; they took no notice of the company on the stage and discussed the matter of their seats at the tops of their voices until I remarked: "I do hope we are not disturbing you?" when they discovered us and fled, I fear without booking seats at all.

There was a most cosy little café here, run by two ladies and their mother, with whom I made great friends, and when the afternoon-tea customers had all departed we gathered round the fire and the dear old lady gave me her impression of Savoy operas, all of which she had seen and loved; to have been a Savoyard seems a universal passport to the esteem and consideration of Savoy devotees, and is by no means to be despised as a recommendation to their unvarying hospitality.

To Worthing on St Valentine's Day, where, having an Early Victorian desire to send one away I ransacked the town to find it, but without success. In my younger days I remember how we boys used to save up our pocket-money for weeks in order to buy expensive rubbish to send to our "loves"; and it was

also useful as a declaration of a passion which might not hitherto have been suspected, and affords an indication of Early Victorian simplicity which would seem to have vanished with the pretty fashion itself. The modern youth has other ways of expressing devotion, and more often than not expects the "present" to come from the opposite direction. Another point of contrast may be noted between "then and now" in that while, in those days, we felt ourselves honoured in the proud possession of "a love," the modern swain is to be frequently heard alluding to his "best girl," an expression which bears the *prima facie* indication of a host of aspirants to the honour of his notice, a complete reversal of the customs of chivalry of which we need not feel inordinately proud.

Max O'Rell has written exhaustively and delightfully on this subject and it might not be an unprofitable procedure to include his essays in the curriculum of schools for the youth of both sexes.

I found several relations and many friends in Worthing who deplored the fact that, it being Lent, they were unable to give themselves the pleasure of going to the theatre. This struck me as most edifying behaviour, but my admiration of their sense of duty was rather chilled on finding out by judicious questioning that they were not prepared to forgo the pleasures of bridge and rinking. When I ventured to ask for an explanation of the difference, an argument ensued which ended in my rescuing a cousin from the fold of intolerance and providing him, at his

AS "PERKS" IN "A MEMBER OF TATTERSALLS," WORTHING

own expense, with a pleasant evening in the proscribed area.

We were to suffer much more severely from the strict observance of Lent a little later on in Ireland, but that this is so is a fact so widely known and appreciated that it becomes your own fault if you court disaster by going there during this period. We, however, did so, and met with the same inconsistency as obtains in England, exemplified by the holding of a Point-to-Point race-meeting at which the whole countryside was present, priests included.

By way of breaking the journey from Worthing to Cork, we put in a week at Derby, another town which I had never previously visited, where our stay was considerably cheered by the hospitality of the officers of the Sherwood Foresters, at the depot. To one of them, by name Stackhouse, I was indebted for a charming excursion by motor car to Repton School, a stroll round the precincts of which made me long for my reincarnation as a schoolboy in residence, the sentiment being intensified by the reception of a cheery nod of salutation from "The Head," an old cricket opponent.

From Derby to Cork, starting on a Sunday morning, is a journey offering a great variety of scenes, expressions, pleasures and pains; occupying as it did from nine-thirty A.M. on Sunday until three-thirty P.M. on the Monday.

One of the bright spots was the excellent dinner provided by the management while waiting two hours for the boat at Holyhead, which we enjoyed

in blissful ignorance of the rising wind which was shortly to make some of us feel we never wished to eat again.

The majority of us were so thankful to get into a train again at Kingstown that we followed a total stranger who resembled our manager, and having bestowed all our personal hand-luggage about the carriage, and ourselves in comfortable corners, were snatching a fitful dose when we arrived at Kingsbridge, where the ticket-collector drew our attention to the fact that we had commandeered a first saloon in place of the third-class we were entitled to, and insisted on our changing. This we absolutely refused to do until breakfast had been served; and we had our way, and our breakfast (some of us), and travelled in comfort to Limerick Junction, where we did have to move, to change, but as our belongings were too numerous to move in the time allowed for stopping they were permitted to remain where they were, thus furnishing the Irish situation of the luggage travelling first class, and the owners thereof third.

I was told that I should find the Irish theatrical landladies most genial and obliging, and so indeed they are, but unless my experiences were unfortunate I should say that a great part of their geniality is assumed for the purpose of concealing shortcomings in the necessities, not to say luxuries, of life and, incidentally, to prevent austere inquiries into the cleanliness, or otherwise, of their rooms and belongings.

Our landlady in Cork was an example, for when,

having spilt a jugful of hot water on the floor of my bedroom, necessitating a great deal of mopping up, I told her I had no idea how pretty the pattern of the oilcloth was, she was offended almost beyond pacification, and for two days went about looking like a terrier who has been discarded for a pom, until I set matters right by an audaciously inspired encomium on her cooking. I only did this under protest, Plummer begging me to do so because "she really had a sweet nature"! The morning bath never furnished more than sufficient hot water for one, and a music-hall star, who was also staying in the house and had found this out, used to be called at seven to bathe and go back to bed, as Plummer declared, on purpose to annoy us. The landlady said the majority of her lodgers took their morning bath during the afternoon, but, in cross-examination, we elicited the fact that the afternoon was the time they selected for breakfast.

The members of the Cork City Club would be very bad to beat for hospitality anywhere, I fancy; there were luncheons and supper-parties galore, and one would-be host suggested a breakfast-party, but seven-thirty was too early for us.

We found auction bridge in full swing here, and Browning, as the author of a book on the subject, was reputed as a shining light, some of the glory of which refracted on me, but I rather dented my halo by playing as "no trumps" a hand in which I had been left with the call of "two hearts"; the truth being that, at the next table to ours, five men were

engaged in a game which seemed to demand loud shouting, and peals of laughter, called I believe "Spoilfive."

One of our "principal hosts"—and very well he played the part—named Wallis, very kindly drove me out to Carrignavar for my first experience of a Point-to-Point meeting in Ireland, where I met more charming people, including the officers of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers, who held the meeting, and fortified the refreshment tent to stand the hospitable siege of all comers. I do not remember ever before meeting at one time so many present and ex-M.F.H.'s, and the whole thing went with a swing and evident enjoyment of the sport which was most refreshing.

Tips abounded of course, and I had a bet on the race, but failed to find a winner, but Plummer, who was unable to come out, had commissioned me to back the favourite in the second race for half-a-sovereign for him, which I entirely forgot to do; it won, and of course I had to pay, but, fortunately, it was only an even-money chance so did not make matters much worse, especially after deducting my winning commission.

My friend Wallis had great hopes of winning the open race with a horse of his, called Good Settler, but about three fences from home, when he looked to have quite a good winning chance, he suddenly awoke to the meaning of his name, and proceeded to illustrate it in the bog, leaving us to our share of the responsibility with the bookmakers.

That horses are very human, and understand more

than some of us imagine, was proved to me in another instance when in Dublin; there was a theatrical company which included among its members a horse, which was being boxed for Cork, wearing the most indignant expression imaginable, and on inquiry I found that the railway company had demanded a fee of sixpence per mile for his conveyance; this appearing to a manager excessive, he had appealed in vain for a reduction of the charge, but a solution of the difficulty was found in booking him at a cheaper rate as "fish," a definition of horseflesh which he evidently very strongly resented.

I had a good story from Major Lynch, for the truth of which he and others vouched, apropos of one of the illegal race-meetings which used to be so popular over here. A man was out with the hounds and took a toss, pursued his loose horse for some two miles, and finally arrived at one of the said meetings, to find that his horse had been caught, christened, entered for a race which was just about to start, and for which he was a hot favourite; his "owner" was up, racing colours and all, and only relinquished his mount on payment of ten shillings, the real owner even then having a narrow escape of being roughly handled by the crowd, which saw itself done out of a supposedly "good thing"!

He was also responsible for a version, which was new to me, of the definition of an Irish "bull" given by a peasant who was asked for his idea, and after much thought evolved the following:—"Well, sorr, av ye go into a meadow where there's fourteen cows lyin'

down, an' one av thim cows is shstandin' up—that cow'll be the bull!"

We had persuaded one of the ladies of our company to form a *menage à trois* with us in Cork—I need hardly say of a perfectly harmless character, or I should certainly not have alluded to it—subject to a week's notice on her part when she considered it desirable to terminate the contract, and it was an inestimable boon to Plummer and myself to have such a charming mess-president and supervisor of general comforts. Her presence was also an admirable corrective to the almost inevitable slackness of good manners which assails the touring actor who perforce must live a self-centred existence, and when, in addition, the C. O. proves herself such an absolute *bon camarade* as did ours, her beneficent influence can hardly be over-estimated. That the situation may, however, be productive of some bewilderment to strangers was brought to our notice in Dublin, where a severe attack of tonsilitis necessitated the calling in of a doctor; being "next for duty" I fetched him, and after his interview he returned to make his report. Plummer and I were at breakfast, and when he alluded to the patient as my wife, I of course undeceived him, whereupon he at once spoke of her as Mrs Plummer; being once more undeceived, he hardly seemed to know what to make of it, but he did not throw up his brief, and later on complimented both of us on our qualities as hospital nurses, which commendation we were proud to have endorsed by the patient.

JOKE THAT FAILED

He was discussing "throats" of all kinds with me one day and I told him a true story of a lady of my acquaintance who had a peculiar kind of flat-footed, shuffling walk which I found very difficult to keep step with; I ventured one day to ask her the reason of it and her answer struck me as most amusing, being that "she had had a bad attack of diphtheria when a child." Never having heard of diphtheria in the feet I expected the doctor to laugh as heartily as I had, but the humour failed to strike him, and he waited, with that disconcerting expression that seems to say "Well?" and I was forced to say "That's all," and laugh myself, but all undaunted I tried him again, this time with some success, with the story of the old lady who asked the policeman, "Where will I get the tram for Blackrock, sorr?" and received for answer, "If ye stay where ye are, ma'am, ye'll get it in the small of yer back!"

I had a somewhat Irish criticism in one of the influential Dublin journals on my "entertainment," which it described as "not in any way brilliant, but perhaps serves its purpose, as being only meant to be a trifle."

The mention of "trifle" recalls a most delightful supper-party given us by Mrs Gunn, the widow of my old friend, and D'Oyly Carte's partner, Michael Gunn, who has not long since retired from the active management of the Dublin theatre, which she took over on her husband's death. Among other delicacies she produced a bottle of very ancient liqueur called Trappistine (her husband's cellar was

famous among his friends), which we found appealed to us very strongly indeed. Mrs Gunn asked if I would carry a bottle of it to my wife, with her love, which I was naturally pleased to do, but never did present run so many risks of not reaching its destination as did that bottle. I could not get home for some weeks, and every Sunday I unpacked on arrival it stared me in the face and asked me to uncork it, which I certainly should have done but for Plummer's stern sense of honesty and firmly expressed intention not to touch a drop of it if I did; it eventually got safely home and was not appreciated!

CHAPTER XIII

BELFAST—PERTH—A PERTHSHIRE IDYLL

It may have been only imagination on my part, but I most certainly received the impression that Belfast was not as strict in its Lenten observances as Dublin and Cork, anyhow it was gratifying to notice an improvement in our business. We were excellently housed here too, and the landlady was the proud possessor of a delightful little baby girl who insisted on supplementing her private commissariat by visiting us at every meal except supper, and demanding her share of whatever was going; she must have had a rare digestion, but tried it rather highly on one occasion when we found her nearly choked with a lengthy strip of bacon rind she had annexed when unnoticed.

It was otherwise a very uneventful week, being too wet for golf, and only redeemed by the incidents of the departure and passage to Glasgow, for which we inherited the reversion of a special steamer which had been chartered to bring over the entire company and effects of *Pinkie and the Fairies.*

Some half-dozen of us assembled for mid-day dinner, before going aboard, at Miss Trevor Lloyd's rooms, and there was tremendous excitement in the street on the arrival of large contingents of Fairies in

furs and attendant nurses and governesses, all looking as if the passage had hardly been as smooth as they could have wished.

I had several saloon berths for the voyage, few of which I used owing to the marvellous smoothness of the sea and the clear night, a combination which offered an irresistible temptation to remain on deck. A short nap, lasting as far as the end of Belfast Lough, fortified me for my night watch which was full of interest. The lights of Ayr, Arran and Ardrossan opened up in turn and the effect was most strikingly beautiful as the islands loomed out of the clear dark of the night, with little points of light increasing from stars to lamps as we drew nearer; the chief engineer had come up for a breath of air as we passed an island on which there was a revolving light which had a most weird effect as it shone first on the sea and then hurried round the cottages and houses on the island as if telling the inhabitants that it was on duty. I spoke of this to the engineer, near whom I was standing, and to my great pleasure he forthwith quoted Kipling's line, "the light which wakes the sailor's wife to prayer." He was anxious that I should go below and inspect his engines, but the idea of so many steps, up again, appalled me and I excused myself on the ground of shortness of breath; he was very sympathetic but some ten minutes later, when I burst involuntarily into song at sight of the gracious moon, giving all the value I could to both parts of the duet, "The Moon hath raised her Lamp above," he remarked,

rather tersely I thought, "There isna much wrang aboot yere chest!"

I thought perhaps he was feeling a little hurt, and tried to explain that singing was not the tax on the breath that stair-climbing would be, and he resumed his friendly smile, whereupon I took an encore for the duet and gave him quite a selection of unaccompanied songs, at the conclusion of which he was kind enough to say, "That's fine." I was just about to launch into a serious recitation, having told him the title of it, when he said he must "gang awa' doon," and did so.

The entrance into, and passage up, the Clyde was a succession of pictures to interest any artistic eye, the chilly dawn growing gradually lighter and disclosing the monster shapes of the big steamers going out, the barges and ferry boats full of workmen crossing the river to the different yards, while the air was already beginning to throb with the noise of iron meeting iron, which as we slowly steamed towards our berth swelled to the full volume of its chorus of workers.

This being my first journey up the Clyde brought me a great disillusionment of the mental picture I had formed of the celebrated stream, but, while much disappointed at its extreme narrowness, I was lost in admiration of the marvellous manner in which these sea-going monsters are warped in and out of docks and through lock-gates which look as if they could not possibly open widely enough.

It seemed, for some reason which I cannot possibly

explain, a most undignified manner of arriving from a foreign country. We slid alongside an unpretentious-looking kind of quay, amid no excitement or curiosity of any sort, landed unobserved and were immediately absorbed into the ordinary street traffic; I felt that someone should have met us, and congratulated us on a safe arrival.

A stroll up Buchanan Street saw us embarked in the train for Perth, a town to which I had always hoped to pay a visit, so rich is it in history and romance. After this very lengthy journey we were more than grateful for the basin of excellent Scotch broth which the intuition of our landlady had provided, but, being somewhat rich, a little went a long way I found, while Plummer, more courageous, shortly after complained of "black spots and the room going round"—which in the kindness of his heart he ascribed to the steamer passage.

Being here, it was the obvious thing to do, to buy and reread "The Fair Maid of Perth," and also visit her house, of which, I gathered, there is very little of the original remaining.

Having also heard a legend to the effect that there was a hotel at the window of which it was possible to sit and fish for salmon (catch salmon, I believe it was) I looked for this also, but failed to find any trace of it, and our host at the golf club on the North Inch, Mr Robertson, whose hospitality considerably brightened the last weeks of Lent, confessed that in all his years of residence, and they were many, he had never heard of such fishing facilities.

We made the acquaintance of a most delightful old lady, a Dundee fishwife, who came twice a week to hawk her wares, and dined regularly with Mrs Milne, our cheery landlady. Mistress Macfarlane was over sixty, and without a grey hair on her head, and of truly noble proportions. These and her unfailing good humour so appealed to Plummer as to impel him to a proposal of marriage, but it appeared that she held men in very light esteem and refused, which was a pity, as she would have played Audrey to perfection, with perhaps a new reading in which Touchstone would have come off second best.

One of our company secured a day's fishing and unfortunately caught some trout, which he kindly presented to us, whereupon he was invited to breakfast to help eat them; they turned out to be rather a failure and I saw the party going breakfastless when our worthy Mistress Milne appeared with a handsome "plat" of eggs and bacon, accompanied with the remark, "I ken weel they Tay troots!" and the balance was restored.

A stroll round the North Inch, where from time immemorial the Burghers Club has golfed, and of old the races were held, was made additionally interesting by an endeavour to locate the spot where Conachar dived into the river at the conclusion of the great fight between the two rival clans so magnificently treated by Sir Walter Scott, but this again no one could point out, nor was there discoverable even a shaving of the ladder Rothesay used in mounting

to the Fair Maid's window. The window itself is, I was credibly informed, the only part of the original house left, and is, *per se*, strong evidence of the purity of Rothesay's intentions, for it is too small to admit the passage of anything larger than a diminutive cat, nor could the Fair Maid have eloped by its means. This is but another proof of the wisdom of leaving unvisited many spots around which the halo of historical romance has cast a glamour which the actuality so often rudely dispels.

We had, however, a romantic experience of our own during the week, to which, imbued with the feeling engendered by the reperusal of Scott's delightful tale, I have felt irresistibly impelled to endeavour to lend an echo of the atmosphere which seems to envelop Perth and its neighbourhood, and which I venture to entitle:

A Perthshire Idyll

or

How Mistress Lucie Symes became a Bride

(*The explanation of words marked * will be found in the Glossary*)

On a heavenly morning in spring, at an hour when many of the honest burghers of Perth were just awaking to the knowledge that a steaming bowl of porridge was awaiting their pleasure, the casual traveller along one of those mysterious wynds * with which their quaint old town abounds, might, were he

possessed of an observant eye, have noticed the sallying forth of a small but gay cavalcade* composed of four persons, whose position and occupation in life he might have been at some pains to determine.

It was too early an hour for the gentry of the town te be astir, while few even of the thrifty mercers had appeared within their beetle-browed doorways, but a second look from the typically incurious Scotsman may have led to the muttered expression "Southrons —they'll be some of yon player folk who tramped into town yestre'en."

The debonair party consisted of a jovial-looking somewhat portly man, who carried his fifty odd years with the mien* of a former athlete, and seemed to be the leader of the expedition, his companion being an alert-looking young woman, whose bright and bonny face indicated the happy and witful temperament associated with the Celtic race. The two other members of the party were a young man, whose appearance and carriage were a juvenile replica of those of his elderly friend, and a buxom maiden of some ten summers, and as many winters, whose springy step and merry outlook proved her possessed of that *joie de vivre** which our Gallic neighbours so keenly appreciate.

Little indeed did any of the four suspect, as they fared forth in the callow morning air, what a strange happening Pandora was preparing for two of their number. With snatches of song and merry jest they left the old town far behind, and below the battle-

ments of Kinnoul sought the banks of the smoothly flowing river where the industrious salmon netters were to be seen hauling on the strands through which the silvery gleam of a Tay salmon, as he surrenders life and liberty, brings a feeling of regret that such things must be ere we can come to the full appreciation of the noble fish.

Here for an idle hour or two the four sat basking * in the sun and watching the netting, until the pangs of hunger gave reminder of the early hour at which the morning nourishment had been consumed, and as, through a lack of foresight on the part of all, severely rebuked by the leader, Master Roland Swift, there had been no effort to provide for this emergency, it became imperative to wander forth in search of the wherewithal to recruit exhausted nature, Master Swift, with the wisdom of years, suggested a retirement to the base, where supplies are invariably kept, but with the enthusiasm of youth—or was this the moment of which Pandora took advantage—Master Glazier loudly clamoured for a forward movement, arguing that there must of necessity be somewhere within reach a hostelry * ready and willing to supply their modest requirements; it being yet wanting some few minutes of noon, and the original intention having undoubtedly been the spending of the entire day away from the city, both Mistress Olive Robartes and Mistress Lucie Symes added their entreaties, and the voice of wisdom, as ordinarily, occupied a rearward position.*

The resolution to go forward at any risk was

followed by a hasty chaffering with the stalwart fisher-folk concerning the price of a ferry to the far side of the Tay, and the matter being adjusted to the delicate satisfaction of these simple-minded men, behold the expedition safely landed at the bottom of a steep and tortuous ghyll* leading up from the banks, among trees, hedges and indigenous wild grasses, which all combined to present nature in a most attractive garb to our four pilgrims. Mistress Lucie here acted as pioneer, with that firm and even flat-footed* step so indispensable to the mountaineer, followed at the space of some three yards by Master Glazier, the rearguard being formed by Mistress Olive and Master Swift; these precise details became noteworthy only in the light of what followed, when some two hundred yards of the ascent had been traversed in the same order, leaving the latter couple in the advantageous position of witnesses* to the importance of the occurrence.

At the side of the path there lay, insidious object, the loose hoop of a barrel, complete in circumference, and of some two feet in diameter; moved by who shall say what spirit of mischief, or fell intent, Master Glazier, having seized the hoop, dexterously flung it over the shoulders of the fair Mistress Lucie, accompanying his action with the fateful words:

"Lucie! With this ring I thee wed!"

Dumb* with astonishment the four stood, until the tension was relieved by the excited exclamation from Mistress Olive of "A marriage! It is a marriage, and we two are the witnesses!" Of the con-

tracting parties Master Glazier appeared the more disconcerted, Mistress Lucie, with a thrifty foresight something unusual in the circumstances, immediately asking of the witnesses: "What are you going to give us for a wedding present?"

Her anxiety being allayed with a Scots penny* on the part of Master Swift and a small and delicate mechanism for improving and cooling the visage on behalf of Mistress Olive, the journey was resumed amid a buzz of excited contemplation of the position, including the practicability of securing a divorce at equally moderate charges and at equal speed. It is notorious that an excessive use of the vocal organs increases the necessity for liquid and solid refreshment, and it was therefore with no little joy to all concerned that there loomed * in the near neighbourhood a house of most attractive exterior.

Whether hostelry or private house, it was determined that there and shortly should these necessities be relieved, and a short approach through the loaning* saw the party greeted by a most hospitable housekeeper, in the absence of the master of the house, at that moment ambling into Perth on his palfrey.*

The diffident request made for a glass of milk and a biscuit was met by an invitation "to come ben* the hoose" and something should be forthcoming, the something eventually proving to be an excellent cup of tea, with the welcome addition of eggs, hot scones, cakes of all kinds and delicious home-baked bread. Surely Lucullus* never partook of a better wedding breakfast than this perfect stranger, in his own

absence, offered to this unexpectedly married pair. And surely none but those under the domination of Cupid could have, in so light-hearted a manner, accepted the Unknown's hospitality. The presence of a loaded shot-gun in the feast-room suggested to Master Swift the advisability of using sufficient despatch in the meal to allow of departure before the return of its owner ; not that this indicated a want of courage on his part, or a supposition that the owner of the house was of a bloodthirsty nature, but rather as a precautionary measure against the possible return of a hungry man to a larder depleted by strangers.

The wedding-feast being despatched, and vails * bestowed, the expedition set forth, cheered and rehabilitated, on its return to Perth, and here the voracious chronicler (a printer's error has crept in, I observe) is compelled to the sad reflection that contentment of the body does not invariably produce contentment of the mind, this being forced upon his notice by the bickerings indulged in by the newly-wedded pair on the homeward path, on all matters pertaining to married life, the ordering of the household and, above all, on the firmly expressed determination on the part of Mistress Glazier to keep control of all moneys, subject to a weekly dole * of infinitesimal dimensions to serve her spouse's private needs.

There being no necessity for concealment, we may admit that the persons taking part in this little pilgrimage were indeed members of the troop of mummers * then performing in Perth, the actual

names being suppressed by the chronicler only in view of any possible question arising as to the validity or illegality of the marriage. Even this precaution would not have been necessary had the contracting parties been certain of their own wishes in the matter, but a regard for the truth compels the historian to reveal that the episode seemed to have created a feeling of slight irritation on the part of both, the determination to consider it a marriage seeming to depend entirely on the mood of one or the other in turn, and the fact of their never being in agreement at the same time put a certain strain on their friendship, which was naturally carefully fostered by the other members of the troupe, who found therein much cause for amusement.

Marriage, it would seem, is rarely an unmixed blessing, and the fatal facility * offered by Scotland for experiments in this direction is much to be deplored. Here are two young people who were happy together as friends, quarrelled the moment they were united, and on the last occasion when met with were as happy once more as previously, being at last in agreement as to the desirability of forgetting the entire occurrence.

There is, however, one aspect of the affair which each would do well to bear in mind, and that is that, the circumstances being known to all the members of the troupe, it will be a costly matter should either of the two later on wish to contract a serious marriage in contradistinction to a Perthshire Idyll! * In conclusion, the narrator of this romantic

episode would like to mention that the involuntary host, Mr Leyburn of the Grange of Elcho, was also met with and thanked for his hospitality later in the week, when he was good enough to express his delight at having been of such signal service in Cupid's cause.

GLOSSARY

PAGE

156. Wynd. A narrow passage haunted by Boreas.
157. Cavalcade. From the French "cheval," a foot traveller.
157. Mien. Signifying "nothing mean about me."
157. *Joie de vivre.* "All alive-oh!"
158. Basking. A change from busking.
158. Hostelry. Non-existent.
158. Rearward position. "Took a back seat."
159. Ghyll. No relation to Gill or Jill.
159. Flat-footed. No personal reference.
159. Witnesses. At times suborned.
159. Dumb. Inexplicable.
160. Scots penny. Invaluable.
160. Loomed. It did not.
160. Loaning. The path to borrow.
160. Palfrey. Anglice, bicycle.
160. Come ben. Everyone knows this.
160. Lucullus. Everyone doesn't.
161. Vails. A motor of satisfaction.
161. Dole. —ful.
161. Mummers. Almost extinct.
162. Fatal facility. Admirable alliteration.
162. Idyll. Something that really happened.

CHAPTER XIV

SUNDAY BATHING—POINTS OF VIEW *re* HEROES—THE "STAR" IN EACH ACT—MAGNANIMITY OF PLUMMER—GOLFERS' EXCUSES—PYJAMAS—"THE JUDGE AND THE LADY"—THE QUORN HUNT MEETING

WHERE could we find a finer sight than the view from either side of a train as it crosses the Forth Bridge to the accompaniments of a storm of rain and hail, varied by the lurid bursts of a brilliant sunset? Perched up at this great height the train itself seems no more than a toy and the whole of the surroundings combine to enforce the reflection that the human being is the veriest atom of Nature's scheme. Even the thought that human brains and hands have united to span this mighty firth for their own convenience, and have thus in a measure dominated the elements, does not altogether reinstate the sense of self-importance which is our normal attitude in face of these wonders, for it brings to the mind the awful fact that what has once happened may happen again, and it is with a distinct feeling of relief that one finds oneself safe on the southern shore and gliding peacefully into Edinburgh.

What a contrast does Edinburgh present to London on a Sunday evening; both are orderly

enough, but there is a kind of subdued gaiety about the Scottish capital which is wholly lacking in town, which I fancy is chiefly to be accounted for by the fact that all who are abroad foregather in Princes Street, the entire length of which is packed with people, who seem to patrol it from one end to the other for at least two hours, and most of whom appear to have a nodding acquaintance with every soul who passes.

The march of civilisation has also, *mirabile dictu*, brought with it the Sunday golf habit, though at present no great facilities are offered by the railway companies for such an unholy revel, but this will doubtless come in time.

With an hour's wait before proceeding to Newcastle-on-Tyne, our destination for the following week, the obvious course is to call on some old friends for afternoon tea; but here a certain disappointment awaited me, owing to this being a surprise visit, in the fact that, tea being over and her callers departed, my hostess had sought the seclusion of the bathroom, whither a certain sense of delicacy precluded me from following her, in spite of the dusty accumulation of a long journey, which seemed to suggest the advisability of so doing.

She had, however, left a charming sister and brother as understudies, who ministered most kindly to our wants, and we went on our way stimulated and refreshed by the ever-welcome tea, hospitality having obliterated all feeling of envy towards the occupant of the bathroom.

Newcastle on Bank Holiday was a vivid contrast to the quiet of Perth, and it was a great treat to be greeted on the Monday night by a house packed from floor to ceiling with an audience determined to be amused with whatever fare was provided for it. They took the hero of the play, Jack Frobisher, to their hearts at once, and the more he "rated" his wife, the Lady Alethea, for her "goings on" the more they applauded his strong though highly virtuous remonstrances, with, however, one exception, as I heard afterwards, that of a man who was asked how he liked the play and replied: "Very much indeed, but I can't stand that Frobisher fellow—he's too damn good to live!"—a somewhat opposite view of the situation to that taken by a feminine sympathiser of Frobisher's, who thought him so much too good for his wife that on their reconciliation, and consequent arrangement, at the end of the play, to leave for Queensland together, she remarked: "Well, it's to be hoped she'll die on the way out!"

In several of the towns we had visited it had been suggested that "it was a great pity that Barrington did not appear in the last act"—the self-seeking old Lord Steventon not making a reappearance after being severely routed by Frobisher in one of his virtuous outbursts—the suggestion not being intended as in any way imputing a fault on the part of the author, but on the ground of the advisability, from a business point of view, of the "star" appearing in each act. Being anxious to put the matter to the test, Mr Sutro was approached, and most kindly wrote

in a part for the Marquis, which certainly had the effect of considerably brightening the last act, but although there was a perceptible increase in the laughter I failed to notice a corresponding one in the receipts, and in no town which we subsequently visited did I hear of an additional row of stalls being required. These facts, however, in no way detract from the charm of the compliment paid me by Mr Sutro in rearranging the last act of his masterpiece on my personal request.

It may have been owing to my vanity over this concession that I met with an unpleasant and undignified little accident in this town; I was going out golfing one morning, and in a, perhaps, lordly manner signalled a tram to stop, which it declined to do until some forty yards past me. I stepped off the kerb hurriedly to go after it. The wood of the street was wet, my nailed boots flew from under me and I landed with a bang on my back, half on the kerb and half in the gutter. I rose with both body and dignity very much hurt, the former arising chiefly from having fallen on my pipe, which was broken and almost embedded in a soft part of the figure, and the shaking I got lasted for some considerable time, and fostered a distrust of nails, the golfer's safeguard.

I was waited on at my rooms by a very deaf middle-aged person, who imagined that she heard quite well, and insisted on long conversations, of a most disconnected nature, with a persistence which rather annoyed me. By way of getting some amusement out of the situation I invited some of the ladies of

the company to tea one afternoon and, without telling them of her affliction, proceeded to address her, with a smiling face, by all the opprobrious epithets of which I could think and of which the presence of ladies admitted. Their blank looks of astonishment at the first two or three efforts were a great joy to me, the Hebe's smile being as expansive as mine, and her answers for once singularly appropriate, and it was not until I asked the "darling old blithering idiot" to bring the relay of muffins, to which she replied that "there's no more eggs in the house," that they began to have a glimmering of the truth, confirmed by my final request for some particulars of her "lurid past," her answer to which was that she had "ordered one from the fishmonger but it hadn't come!"

There was one feature connected with the introduction of the Marquis into the last act of the play which will always give me great pleasure to remember; it is inevitable that when one character is to be specially considered some other part must suffer, and in this case it was that of Hannaford, which was played by Lambert Plummer. The part had some excellent comedy lines, the majority of which were bodily transplanted to that of Lord Steventon, and I confess to a feeling of uneasiness at the first rehearsal, arising from the mental suggestion of "put yourself in his place," as to how this ruthless treatment of his part might affect my friend; it was therefore a source of great pleasure to find that neither then nor at any subsequent moment did Plummer betray the faintest sign of annoyance or chagrin over the affair, a forbearance which

I venture to think as rare as it was delightful. I have known instances where artists of good standing and equal attainments have waged furious at the deletion of a line or two, not to mention a whole speech, from their part, entirely oblivious of the necessity for alteration as the scene shapes itself at rehearsal; and I have seen an emotional extra-lady burst into tears at being told she could not speak a certain remark, which must be given to Miss Blank—the fact that Miss Blank was the only person who could be "on" in the scene in question proving no kind of consolation whatever.

My visit to Sheffield this time was chiefly notable for a very striking illustration of the elasticity of theatrical rooms; the house was a detached one, and by no means large, yet it served to shelter Mr and Mrs Browning, two other ladies of the company, myself and a married couple of music-hall artists of German-American extraction, who played various wind instruments by day and by night, in addition to which there was the family, which I believe numbered four in all. We were all waited on by one little Abigail of fourteen, the daughter of the house, and although the meals were punctual and tolerably well cooked it was unavoidable that much was left to be desired in other directions, and the policy of overcrowding must be at least a doubtful one to pursue. The prevailing idea on the part of landladies in houses of this type seems to be that a certain amount of attention being paid to the cleanliness and comfort of the sitting-room warrants the almost complete neglect of the bedroom department. This may pro-

ceed from a desire to inculcate the principle of early rising, which, I am told, is somewhat lacking in "the profession," and it certainly achieved its object in my case, for I spent as little time as possible in the comfortless sleeping-retreat placed at my disposal, but the virtue of early rising was largely discounted by the vice of late retirements, and I was not sorry when the week was over and I again became normal.

I had a day's golf here with Browning and found that I was still suffering from the effects of my fall in Newcastle, my right arm being very stiff, and to this cause I naturally ascribed the severe beating I received. How is it that so few golfers are ever beaten on their merits, I wonder; there is always some excuse to offer, and from my own personal experience the excuses are as varied as they are numerous, ranging from the man who missed a put to win the match at Felixstowe because of the noise made by the larks—to him who has had his game ruined by the barring of a certain club which he probably very seldom used.

There is an old adage to the effect that an Englishman never knows when he is beaten, but that was written before golf was introduced, for there can be no mistake about five up and four to play. I do however recollect a match I lost at Cassiobury for the result of which I submit I had a valid excuse. My host and opponent said to me before starting: "You won't mind the dogs going round with us, Pooh Bah?"—to which I unsuspectingly replied: "Certainly not!" and off we started with the pack

of four. I was not long in discovering that they had all been trained to take a polite interest in putting, and on every green they seemed to take it in turn to come between the eye and the hole at the most critical moment. I spoke very strongly to one middle-aged fox-terrier, who was the worst offender, and to my great relief he made a dignified exit homewards, but his three friends stuck bravely to the task, and it was almost worth the defeat I sustained to witness their evident delight when I handed the stakes to their victorious owner, Lord Essex.

I suggested to him that the pack was worth a few strokes to him on the round, but he only remarked: "I was afraid you'd find them a nuisance, that's why I asked you first!"

I made another match for a future occasion, "dogs barred," but there seems to be great difficulty in fixing a date.

On the last three nights of the week in Newcastle I gave a trial to a new sketch with which I was to open at the Tivoli on the conclusion of the tour. It was written by my old friend and Savoy colleague, Arthur Law, and was a condensation of a three-act farce of his which had had some vogue. He called the sketch *The Judge and the Lady* and it proved very successful, although suffering from that tame finish which seems so difficult to avoid in these trifles.

The method requisite for this sketch work is so strikingly different to that called for by the

ordinary stage play that the way it went spoke very highly to the powers of adaptability possessed by the artists who appeared in it and who really seemed to revel in the chance afforded for a little relaxation from High Art. Hot baths, blankets, nightcaps and pyjamas entered largely into the scheme, which also included a baby, which of course was only a dummy, no real one being of stout enough material to stand the treatment required by the plot. Apropos pyjamas, Pauline Chase and Marie Lohr seem to have set the fashion of pyjama plays, but even they might have been jealous of the latest recruit; Plummer, in the sketch in question, presenting a quite gorgeous spectacle; my pyjamas were hidden under a dressing gown, and I trust the day may be far distant on which circumstances may compel my appearance in this *negligé*, though really, with the present craze for presenting most of the feminine intimities of costume in public, and the almost total absence of the same articles in the case of certain lovely dancers, it becomes difficult to determine where realism should cease and art recommence, and a representation of the Garden of Eden, if put on the stage, would probably be severely criticised unless "altogether" true to nature.

A protest against a pyjama-monopoly on the part of the ladies is offered by Charlie Hawtrey in that delightful adaptation of a witty French comedy called *Inconstant George*—in my humble opinion one of the cleverest specimens of writing, contrast of character, and invention that has been seen for a long

CHARLES HAWTREY

time. The delicate shade of Hawtrey's night-wear is an excellent contrast to the "voyant" gown-tones of the lady who so artistically, and with no hint of suggestion, has attitudinised sinuously on the gorgeous coverlet before he makes his appearance, and the stage management of this act in particular is a remarkable instance of the skill requisite in a skater on ice of French manufacture.

Where have we an author capable of inventing the humour of that situation where a man is taxed by his friend with writing love-letters to that friend's wife, and this while in the undignified position of being in bed? And if we have such an author, have we the censor to pass it?

Hawtrey's mixture of dismay, irritation and anger at the absurd figure he feels he must cut are all admirably shadowed, and no less delightful, in quite another atmosphere, is the delicate restraint shown at the final curtain of the play, when, without laying a single finger on the sleeping girl he loves, he sits, at some little distance, to watch over her till the arrival of her legal guardian.

The play is preceded by a very charming little one-act wordless play (so-called), entitled *The Portrait.* I was rather surprised at finding on the programme the name of Gordon Cleather as taking part in this, and knowing him as a delightful singer I felt regret that under the circumstances I should not be allowed to hear him, but to my great astonishment the curtain rose on my friend Cleather, representing an artist in his studio, and singing a very charming

song! I looked at my programme, fancying I must have read it wrongly—but no, it said "wordless" play —and sure enough, when he had finished singing he was unable to speak!—and, with an occasional burst of song, this state of things obtained until the end of the play. It struck me as so quaint that a man should be able to sing and not talk that, as far I was concerned, the little play lost much of its effect.

My experience with the Leeds audiences led me to think that the same predilection for stronger fare than my entertainment provided might exist in Bradford, an idea which received strong confirmation on the Monday night, when several occupants of the gallery made a leisurely but very noisy exit, during one of my best stories, and, as I afterwards heard, inquired of the manager: "What sort of —— tommy-rot are ye givin' us now?"

Even this did not convince the management of the desirability of a change of "opening," but the Tuesday and Wednesday proving equally depressing, I insisted on "trying" *The Judge and the Lady*, with the pleasing result of being asked why I had not mentioned the style of it before!

It is difficult to account for the prejudice which exists in the minds of theatrical managers against the "unknown," extending to plays and players alike; it is of course one of the greatest difficulties which an untried author or artist has to face, and is almost insurmountable without the aid of either some fortunate chance or the golden key.

In this particular instance it was merely a repeti-

tion of the old formula " well, it can't be worse," which furnished yet another proof of how much better it was, and I can only hope that the non-contents of the first night were beguiled into giving me a chance of reinstatement.

Edward Compton was here, with a very luxurious blue motor car, and incidentally with his Comedy Company, at the other theatre, and John Hart, he and I had a pleasant day's golf at Hawksworth, Hart's hospitality to all golfers visiting Bradford being an inducement to go there as frequently as possible, and greatly adding to the attraction of a first-rate links.

From Bradford to Halifax would seem to be about a twenty minutes' journey, according to both trains and trams, but to occupy a whole Sunday with such a trip would be a task beyond even the cleverest arranger of a tour, so we lengthened it to an appreciable extent by putting in a week at Nottingham on the way, a detour which pleased me very much as I always look forward to visiting Nottingham, where I have friends who have given me many pleasant times and recollections; also it was an agreeable preparative for a stay in a town which I have so frequently heard alluded to in a very disparaging manner, a manner which, from my own experience, I find to be totally unwarranted.

The Quorn Hunt Meeting was held at Loughborough during the week we were in Nottingham, and, as neither Plummer nor I had ever seen the course, we determined to honour the proceedings

with our presence and, if possible, capture some wealth from the bookmakers. We accomplished the former intention, but the latter proved (as usual) a task beyond our intelligence, not having more of this commodity than we could gather from *Sporting Snippets*, the tipsters of which journal—or should one say "vaticinators"?—being of such varied opinions as to select at least four horses for each race, which made a selection difficult in the face of only three runners. We backed the favourite in the first race and to our horror saw him fall at the last fence but one, when leading fully ten lengths from the only horse that seemed to threaten danger; by the time the rider had got him up and remounted, the other horse was well past him and was rapidly—or so it seemed, but was not—nearing the last fence, and our excitement was intense; however, our hero caught him, they jumped the fence together and the favourite sailed home an easy winner. The horse was Captain Power's Revelstoke and was ridden by the gallant gentleman-rider, Teddie Brooks, and it was a great and popular performance.

The fatigue of drawing our winnings, coupled with the strain of a fairly long walk from the station, suggested the advisability of a retirement to the luncheon tent, but to our dismay no such harbour of refuge was to be found and we were forced to be content with large chunks of bread and cheese, after all not a lunch to be despised, but with the usual irony of Fate, for having satisfied our cravings, and started for a stroll along the coaches and cars on the aristocratic side of

the course, we received at least three invitations to most *recherché* luncheons, which we could not accept.

I secured some excellent snapshots of the different occurrences at the meeting, which will serve as a souvenir of a very enjoyable day, and I cannot help a slight feeling of regret at the edict pronounced against this practice by the Jockey Club officials, for it seems a little hard that the pleasure of the many should be barred on account of the intrusive few who most undoubtedly take these pictures with the frankly avowed object of selling them to journals.

On the other hand it might be a source of great annoyance to the victim should he be "snapped" cheering home a winner when he should have been cheering his leader in the House. I was myself once "shot" at Kempton when I should have been appearing at a charity matinée in town, and oddly enough with the very lady with whom I was to have acted, and to meet with whom, at the races, was a great surprise, she having sent me a telegram early that morning to the effect that "she did not feel well enough to play!" which was the sole reason why I absented myself from the performance. The number of artists who "promise to appear," and fail on the day, has, it seems to me, greatly increased of late, and is much to be deplored; the inability to say "no" when asked is frequently the cause of this failure to keep faith, and should be sternly discouraged, as it falls hardly on those who do fulfil their promise and are frequently compelled, by their good nature, to supply the deficiency with an "extra turn."

CHAPTER XV

HALIFAX—FALSE ECONOMY—HULL

HALIFAX at last! Which sounds rather like reaching the Promised Land, the comparison being borne out to some extent by the wearisome journey contingent on my arrival; had it been Halifax, Nova Scotia, it could not have taken much longer or been much more crowded with incident.

The circumstances incidental to my arrival were hardly calculated to counteract the poor reputation of the town for comfort and elegance of which I had been a frequent oral recipient, a cold and pitiless rain in the small hours not being the best of mediums for viewing novel surroundings.

Business of importance had necessitated my presence in London for a few hours on the Sunday, and the summons being quite unexpected I preferred to travel back the same night to making an unannounced appearance at home at a late hour and being thereby compelled to travel most of the next day with the certainty of making a "first appearance in this town" of a fatigued description.

There was also an additional motive in the shape of an intermittent attack of economy, to which I am very occasionally subject, and which foolishly sug-

gested the idea that the night journey would eliminate the otherwise obvious hotel bill.

This praiseworthy resolution, like many another, proved better in theory than practice, but it was possibly my own fault in selecting a train which should have gone direct, but, in some mysterious manner, side-slipped and threw me out at York.

I have, in common with many people who should know better, always prided myself on a capacity to thoroughly understand Bradshaw, indeed I have frequently picked up his guide for an odd five minutes of light reading, when I have devised trips which I should like to have made, but on this occasion I discovered later that I had overlooked a train which, for some occult reason, was given in abnormally small figures and which would not only have given me an extra hour in town but would have travelled direct and arrived at the same time as the one I carefully selected, but as this is one of the traps which Bradshaw lays for his readers I was consoled by the thought of the pleasure it would afford him when he heard that I had fallen into it.

The arrangement of train time-tables has always been a matter of wonder and admiration to me, and I have always had a great desire to meet Bradshaw and tell him what I think of some of his tricks, but when I consider the number of heads which have been put together on the compilation and production of the play in which I am now appearing—viz. *The Girl in the Train*—which deals with only one train, I am forced to the conclusion that more than one hand goes

to the framing of railway tables and that, *ergo*, Bradshaw is a myth, and should be "and Co," a Q.E.D. which I arrive at with regret as dispelling another illusion of youth.

But to my train. From London to York I slept fitfully in a much overheated compartment, being frequently aroused by sonorous choruses chanted by a team of victorious footballers on the next coach, who were returning to their northern fastnesses full of goals and beer; at York, where I had to change and wait some fifteen minutes, I was much cheered by a cup of some hot beverage which I was informed was meant to represent coffee, which it did very feebly, and then came the deviation, from York to Leeds, which the later train would have avoided. It was during this part of the journey that I appreciated the kindness of motive in Bradshaw's trap, for, as we rushed along through wolds and on the tops of moors in a grey dawn, presaging a stormy day, the effect was one never to be forgotten, causing me to break forth into the lines at the end of this chapter, which any reader who is so minded can skip.

To the artistic eye there may be discernible a slight deterioration in the style of the coaches working this journey as compared with those of the main artery, and on making a final change at Leeds for Halifax this subtle distinction became still more strongly marked, the "local" train seeming to express (no joke) the feeling that "if you will travel at these unearthly hours you must think yourself lucky to get there in anything!" However, about

six o'clock I did arrive, the only passenger, with not even a friendly porter to greet me and tell me where I lived, and the rain falling in torrents. I put myself under the guidance of a burly operative of sorts, who seemed anxious for a job, not without certain misgivings of being beguiled into some side street and robbed, which were absolutely without foundation, for he led me straight to the house, my troubles as I thought being ended, but I was wrong again; ring and knock as I might I could awake no one except the *décolletée*-looking landlady of the house two doors off, who inquired with much cordiality if I wanted rooms; I presume she must be on the watch, night and day, for customers, as she betrayed no surprise at the unearthly hour of my arrival.

I informed her that I had some rooms but couldn't get in, so she retired with a snort of annoyance and contempt, and I took up a position in the centre of the street (it was still raining in torrents) and yelled "Plummer!" at the top of my voice, till I thought the police would interfere. The door was at last opened by a somnolent youth, who said he "thought he'd heard something!" and was kind enough to take me absolutely on trust and show me to the sitting-room before retiring to his broken rest.

After an interlude of lager beer and bread and butter, which I annexed from a cupboard without any knowledge of their legal owner, I went exploring for my bedroom, carrying in my hand a large slice wherewith to appease anything or any-

body I might meet, and the first room I entered contained Plummer, fast asleep; I woke him and he said he had distinctly heard me calling him but thought it was a dream, as I was not expected for hours; not recognising his right to dream of me at all, I insisted on his eating the bread and butter, in the hope that a worse dream would follow, discovered my own room and was soon sleeping the sleep of the wearied traveller whose troubles are over, but as I dosed off I recognised that the economical tendency, which had been the origin of the scheme, had failed to materialise, as, owing to the footballers, I had first of all paid eleven shillings' excess from London to York; then the porter at York had naturally transferred my dressing-case from one first-class carriage to another on the branch line—being a first-class traveller was proof of my inability to carry it myself—four shillings more; then another carried it from one station to the other at Leeds, another shilling, and by that time I had become so convinced of the futility of further endeavours at saving money as to resolutely "book" first class for the rest of the journey; the extra sovereign or so thus invested in false economy would have furnished a bed and breakfast of more than moderate expanse, but I should have been robbed of an experience which I thoroughly enjoyed retrospectively.

There is excellent golf at Halifax, and on the far side of the hills, among the spurs of the moor, it was very pleasant to hear the grouse calling their appreciation of a good stroke, a cheerful sound which

I heard twice in one day. This is not to be taken as a confession of bad play on my part, which would perhaps excuse a certain amount of grousing, but rather a testimony of the superexcellence of the two strokes in question. The journey out to the links on the tram is well worth the time and trouble, even to a non-golfer, on account of the magnificent views presented as the car travels higher and higher up the hills which surround the town in all directions, and it is a quaint sight to look across valleys and see other trams outlined on the sky-line and looking like crawling flies, with others coming down hills like the side of a house, holding on by their feet. Our particular car stopped carefully some half-mile from the links, but a cautiously tendered bribe of a shilling resulted in the extra distance being negotiated, at which I felt rather pleased, until informed that it was quite legal and at the option of any traveller wishing to traverse the extra bit.

Miss Clarice Mayne was appearing at the Variety Theatre during the week we were there, with her talented actor accompanist, Mr Tate, singing her celebrated song, " I'm longing for Someone to Love Me," and she also made her first appearance on the links under his tuition one day when we were out there playing, braving a very heavy hailstorm with the courage and enthusiasm proper to a beginner. We passed them at the second hole, Miss Mayne having twice missed the ball entirely, and I could not resist paraphrasing her song and chanting, " I'm

longing for Someone to 'Hit' Me!"—a reflection on her skill which seemed not only to amuse her but also to stimulate her efforts, for she immediately hit the ball well, and very nearly myself with it.

Hull was the next town we visited on the tour, and it being my third visit within the last two years or so it felt rather like coming home, a feeling intensified by the greetings awaiting me from personal friends. I also had a married niece in residence at Beverley, a visit to whom brought in its train a stroll round this wonderfully picturesque old town, where there are countless "bits" to be found which would delight an artist with a sense of colour in old walls and quaint buildings.

It was while we were in Hull that the news of King Edward's serious illness became the one topic of conversation, and there was a most distinctly felt air of uneasiness and concern which seemed to affect everybody and everything, and when the terrible news came of the fatal termination of the illness, its appalling suddenness seemed to leave us absolutely breathless with consternation and grief, the dominant feeling, even with those who had never set eyes upon him, being that of the loss of one's dearest and most intimate personal friend—a striking tribute to the grand personality of the King who had so endeared himself to every single individual of his subjects as a man.

The night before the dreaded news arrived we went through our work in an atmosphere of tension which was evidently shared to its full extent by the

audience, and the whole proceedings were so perfunctory as to afford an experience which I can never forget and which I trust will never be repeated.

After the Friday night's performance we, of course, closed down and found our way home to London, a day earlier than would otherwise have been the case, and thus concluded a tour which I shall always look back upon with a grateful remembrance of many happy times with very pleasant associates.

I had been touring for so long that it felt quite strange on the following Monday morning not to be rushing off to some provincial city, and indeed it was some weeks before I finally realised that I had at last secured the London engagement which is the ambition of so many actors on tour; at the moment of writing this that engagement has lasted close upon nine months, and looks quite likely to record yet another nine, *The Girl in the Train* being evidently a first-class traveller, who appears to have taken out a season ticket, but with the additioned privilege of being able to transfer her "season-ticket" to other representatives of the part, Miss Phyllis Dare having had four successful successors who have in turn changed at Vaudeville Junction and taken other lines; as a matter of fact I am the only passenger who has made the complete journey without a stop.

I conclude this chapter, as I threatened, with my attempt to describe in verse one of the episodes on my journey to Halifax, and may perhaps be allowed

to reiterate the hint that there is no binding obligation to read it.

DAWN ON THE MOORS

There is a wind which blows when dawn is near
And all the world is lying calm and still;
And whatso'er may be the time of year
This wind, or faint or strong, is always chill!
Just as our forces fail at ebb of tide,
Which brings the weakest hour of all to man,
So does the desolated countryside
Appear to suffer from the self-same ban!

Come to this window here, and watch with me
The soft grey dawning of this April day,
And turn your eyes, the misty shapes to see
Of beech and elm and larch in feathered spray.
We rush and roar along in speeding train
Out on the top of undulating wolds
Which are a-glint with newly-fallen rain
That greets us as the silv'ry dawn unfolds.

What are those forms fantastic, dancing there
Out on the misty moorlands' rise and fall?
Are they gay cavaliers and ladyes fair
Beneath the trees they deem a pillared Hall?
See how the sunrise with its first faint gleam
Throws on these shapes an opalescent mist,
Lends them the colours of an artist's dream
Such as you find in cobweb new sun-kist!

What is the measure which they tread so fast,
These slender wraiths by April dawning drest?
So strenuous, they sink to earth at last,
As though in yearning for their long day's rest!

DAWN ON THE MOORS

Smoke from the engine, say you? Surely no!
Visions evoked by thoughts of other dawns!
See! There is one whose graceful form I know!
Who oft has paced with me on trim-kept lawns.

And look! The Sun is tinging all the skies
With promise of another heav'n-sent day
Such as, alone, she gives me, when her eyes,
So tender, sweet and true, are turned my way!
The Day is come! And she—who knows it near—
And knows me lonely—sees me, in her sleep—
Comes with it! For a moment, brief but clear,
We are together! Lovers' tryst to keep!

CHAPTER XVI

UNDERSTUDIES AND ASPIRANTS

WHATEVER the play to be produced, musical or otherwise, we are constantly being told nowadays by the "inspired" journalist that, "Mr Manager has found great difficulty in casting certain of the parts"; this is, on the face of it, only another way of suggesting that there is an alarming dearth of talent among actors and actresses, an imputation which is perhaps not entirely unwarranted—although it is my belief that there are plenty of artists of both sexes who only need the longed-for opportunity to prove their mettle. There are many seekers for these opportunities, but they do not always materialise because of the seeking, although the simple fact of being "on the spot" has frequently had a happy result, but just as frequently the reverse. Luck enters largely into the matter; as for instance in a case which came under my personal observation quite lately: a stage aspirant had successfully stormed the magic circle and, though only just emerged from his shell, was of so precocious a nature as to be forthwith entrusted with a few—but important—lines; in justice to him it must be admitted that he was born with certain social advantages which made for com-

petency in the matter of speaking the King's English and also endowed him with an accompanying distinction of appearance; he was no sooner afloat on his first small raft than he consulted me on applying for the second understudy of the principal comedy part, which he was very diffident about obtaining. I ventured a prophecy that he would get it, and moreover that, should he have the good fortune to be wanted to play it, he would come through the ordeal with credit. Within less than one month he was instructed to proceed to a large town in the provinces and take up the part, the principal comedian having been taken ill; and his performance was so satisfactory to the management that he has remained in the company ever since. This of course is a deserving case, but here is where the luck came in: the first understudy would, in the ordinary course of events, have been sent from London, but could not be spared from his post because the comedian he understudied had been ordered to take a rest.

This is of course a somewhat exceptional case and many aspirants may grow grey as understudies without such a chance.

I should be the last to depreciate the value of an artistic education, either musical or dramatic, and everyone is aware of the good work done not only by public academies but also by schools formed by active or retired singers and actors; but I invariably experience a feeling of sadness on reading those lengthy lists of names, which appear with an appalling

regularity, of students who have passed this or that test, have won gold or silver medals for this or that accomplishment, and are then scattered broadcast to assail the different professions for which they are stamped as not only eligible but proficient.

As regards acting, pure and simple—by which I only mean to exclude musical plays—there cannot possibly be more than one school which the aspirant will find it advantageous to join, the school of "practice in public," and of this stamp of school there are not many to choose from; in bygone days Sarah Thorne's companies were responsible for many of the well-taught artists who are still among us, and to F. R. Benson undoubtedly belongs the credit of doing yeoman service to the modern stage, his Shakespearean repertoire company having, under his judicious training, been the means of discovering, modelling and perfecting the dormant talents of many of our present prominent favourites.

All the odd "acting societies" which have been formed of late years must also undoubtedly work for good; I do not intend, in using the word "odd," any reflection on their character or behaviour, but only an allusion to their number, which seems steadily on the increase, the title chosen by one of the latest formed possibly however having influenced my mind in using the adjective. They most certainly provide opportunities for producing such talent as their committees may decide to be in the possession of certain plays and players, which otherwise might languish for ages in the oblivion from which some of

each should never have been dragged, and for this the playgoing public should be grateful, for in spite of all the drawbacks of inconvenient times and places of production, which render the presence of the "managerial eye" a difficulty, I believe it is a fact that these performances have proved of material advantage to authors, artists, and even absentee managers.

These societies are, however, hardly "schools," many of the artists belonging to them, and taking part in their performances, having already won their spurs in the acting world and accepting these fitful appearances as a means of reminding forgetful managers that there is genuine talent about, if they will only spare the time to look for it.

Aspirants for work in musical plays have perhaps more to go through before coming into the horizon of the manager's view than their more fortunate brethren of the dramatic stage, having first of all to pass the dread ordeal of a "voice trial," nowadays rather magniloquently alluded to as "an audition"; the word ordeal only faintly describes what is frequently a holocaust of ambitious victims, who stand or sit about the stage in dismal half-dozens awaiting their turn to demonstrate their fitness, or the reverse, before a judge of the sternest description and a jury composed of fellow-aspirants, robbed of most of their sympathy from the very fact of the competition. It is little wonder that voices quiver and knees tremble long before the first verse of the selected song has been interrupted with a suave "Thank you—that

will do — you shall hear from us if there is a vacancy."

I have been present at many of these "auditions," and must admit that the sketch given of one of them by Pélissier and his confrères at the Apollo is so near the actual thing at some moments as to be almost equally painful.

I suppose there is no actor or actress of assured position who is not constantly being implored to use his or her influence in obtaining a start for some prodigy of talent which has been discovered by, as a rule, admiring mothers or fathers, whose notions as to the requirements for a theatrical career would be laughable if not so pathetic.

There is a popular superstition to the effect that "a word from you will do *so* much, Mr Actor," but my own experience teaches me that, with of course some few exceptions, that "word" is, if anything, less of an assistance than an actual drawback; I fancy there is a lurking suspicion on the part of the high official approached that the counsel for the plaintiff has his own fish to fry, and no doubt this is frequently the case, while an additional difficulty is added to the procuring of an opening for some protégé by the species of *chevaux-de-frise* of accredited agents and appointed talent seekers which surrounds every manager of distinction, and who are humanly resentful of any infringements of their privileges.

The commercial element will also occasionally enter largely into the transaction; of course entirely with-

out the knowledge of the manager, and against his principles as well, and I well remember a case occurring some years since when it was discovered that a chorus master had framed his recommendation of the applicants on a scale corresponding with the fee he had received; needless to say that, on the circumstances leaking out—if I remember rightly through his strongly recommending a vocalist who had no voice whatever—he ceased to adorn that particular theatre with his presence.

Even after all the outworks have been stormed, and the much-desired contract secured, there is in most cases a long and wearisome term of probation to be passed before the chance is offered, and bitter heart-burning will be aroused by the selection, for some inexplicable reason, of another aspirant for the position which on the surface belongs, of right, to the slighted one.

I was once rehearsing for a musical play in which I was to appear, and the leading lady—who had a rather dramatic type of part—was for some reason prevented from attending some three or four rehearsals; it was naturally difficult to proceed with the scenes in which she was concerned without some sort of representative, and being the early days of rehearsals, understudies had not been allotted; however, on a request from the stage manager for someone to come to his assistance and read the part, an intelligent and youthful chorister promptly proceeded to show that she not only knew most of the words and music but was capable of giving a

more than useful rendering of the part; the average person would reason from this that she would be given the regular understudy—which in fact she was—and that on the first opportunity she would be called upon to play it—which she was not—at least two other people being given preference over her. The same girl also came to the rescue one evening during the run of the play, when the soubrette of the cast was suddenly seized with illness just as the end of the act approached, and stepping out of the ranks took up the part and finished the act, thus saving an awkward situation.

I am not at all sure that there is not a certain danger to the prospects of a career in demonstrating this species of "general utility," the above being by no means an isolated case of the kind within my own experience, and it is only too certain that such treatment, however unavoidable, and for whatever reason meted out, is bound to create a feeling of discouragement difficult of dissipation.

The ideas of stage managers certainly appear to run in a kind of groove, at least as regards understudies, any effort at originality on their part being, as a rule, sternly repressed; this is all very well, of course, if such originality tends to make a serious difference in the scheme of the play or scene in which it is shown, but as so many of the popular favourites of the day have secured much of their popularity by certain little tricks of manner, quaint gestures and idiosyncrasies of all sorts and kinds, it naturally follows that it must prove an almost insurmountable

handicap to the understudy to be compelled to follow so literally in the footsteps of his or her overstudy, so few of the supervisors having the power to discriminate in the matter of personal temperament and thereby realise the values of a slightly different reading compelled by the difference in nature.

This lack of perception is the means of placing many a round peg in a square hole while square pegs to fit truly lie at hand unnoticed; if Mr Jones is short, stout and shock-headed, the ranks of the professional army are searched to provide an understudy for him with the same personal attractions, and he is secured without any consideration as to his real fitness for the part and even less as to whether the part might not perhaps be more effective if played by an artist who is tall, thin and of more sedate capillary adornments. Confusion becomes worse confounded if, in such a case, the part played by the original artist is not precisely of the style which the author would have written for him had he been aware of his going to play it, but which, by right of his position as "principal comedian," is, in a manner, forced upon him; it is easy to understand that, given the original discrepancy between artist and rôle, and adding thereto the difference between artist and understudy, we frequently obtain a kaleidoscopic result as irritating as it is unnecessary.

Looked at from every aspect there is little doubt that the position of an understudy is a not too enviable one, and it is not to be wondered at that those who have been through the mill, and have attained

success are as a rule full of sympathy and ready with assistance to those who are still on probation, and it is by no means one of the least pleasant incidents of stage life to recall the many occasions on which, after the fall of the final curtain, a spontaneous and hearty burst of applause has greeted the initial effort of a performer, from the hands not only of the principal artists concerned but the entire company, who have watched that effort with a sympathy and appreciation possibly enhanced by the reflection that yet another has stepped out of the ranks and set foot on the ladder of success.

CHAPTER XVII

AUTHORS AND ALTERATIONS

THE would-be playwright of to-day has, it would seem, a far greater chance of securing a hearing, or at all events a reading, than was accorded to his like in past times, a fact that undoubtedly works for the benefit of the play-going public; for where, some years ago, we could count the recognised authors almost on the fingers of one hand, not only would both hands now be wanted but even the feet-fingers might have to be requisitioned; the latter suggestion is not, perhaps, entirely inept, as some of the so-called plays which have actually been presented to a discriminating public verdict have been sufficiently clumsily contrived as to warrant the innuendo.

The "one-handed" authors, so to speak, have maintained their well-earned position, but serious rivals have sprung up in all directions, and some of the most notable successes of late years have been achieved by women writers, some of them being novelists of distinction and some entering the arena direct, thereby escaping one of the most insidious pitfalls laid for the former, that of a predisposition to redundancy which is the natural outcome of tale-writing as opposed to play-writing.

In this connection it is rather interesting to observe that the "dramatised novel" very rarely obtains the success achieved by the "original" play, and the writers who have succeeded in dramatising their own novels without seeking the aid of someone qualified to instruct in the art of stage construction are even rarer than the *nigro cygno* so frequently alluded to by the platitudinist. It is in fact becoming more and more plain that, with the exception of some few writers, more than one cook is an absolute necessity to the proper seasoning of the dramatic broth, and even among the exceptions are to be found exceptions where the friendly critic has been compelled to place a warning finger on a weak spot.

It is certain that in the case of musical plays it has become a *sine qua non* that a multiplicity of cooks shall be employed, even the writer of the love lyrics, in some cases, being considered as unequal to the strain, or should it be strains, of also providing the necessary humorous songs, thereby frequently producing a hotchpotch of style which has perhaps done as much as anything to earn for this kind of entertainment the definition of "go as you please."

As an instance of the incongruities which may, and do, arise out of this situation the present version of *The Girl in the Train* offers a striking example; with the inclusion in the cast of Miss Connie Ediss it became imperative to provide her with a song, *sua generis*, and an additional author was at once called in to furnish it, with the happy result of a great success for Miss Ediss in a ditty entitled

"When I was in the Chorus at the Gaiety," which is set to a very captivating tune; I have not been able to discover the names of either author or composer, but gather that the former could hardly have seen the play, in which Miss Ediss' part is that of an old and valued confidential maid-servant in a Dutch family, resident in Holland, who could never by any possibility have appeared at the Gaiety Theatre, London.

Of course, where the story or plot of a piece is of no great consequence these glaring inconsistencies may by their effectiveness warrant their inclusion, but where there is more than a thread of a story—as there undoubtedly is in this play—it becomes a rather severe task on the energies and talents of the members of the cast holding that thread, to reunite it and reawaken the interest of the audience which has been shattered by a violent break at the moment it was thought to be secured.

The feelings of an author who revisited his play after a long absence, and possibly in ignorance of the changes made, can be more easily imagined than described; but even so, when met with the comforting assurance that the box-office receipts had appreciably increased, owing to these innovations, there is little doubt that his resentment would be soothed by the application of a little unearned increment.

I have often thought that it would be interesting, in the way of an experiment, to adopt the same procedure in the case of a comedy written, say, by some one of our autocratic authors who allows no other pen to have a share in his work.

Take for instance a play by Sir Arthur Pinero (any play) which has earned its usual great success and is at length approaching the end of the run; retain the main features of the plot and reverse all the characters; let the good long-suffering husband become the "pleasure-seeking-at-any-cost-to-domestic-happiness" person, in place of the wife, as in the original, and so on with the rest of the cast, possibly by this means arousing sufficient curiosity in the public mind to furnish another twelve months' run.

In the important matter of royalties the position of modern authors shows great improvement, the percentages are larger, and are paid with a regularity undreamt of in "the good old days," and therefore one successful play proves in itself a small fortune, another reason why so many plays are now exploited.

An excellent story apropos this question appeared the other day in *London Opinion*, which, with apologies, I venture to annex; the author was the well-known and popular musical director of Drury Lane, Jimmy Glover, who said that he once adapted a play from the French for three pounds, with promise of a further ten shillings if it were a success; the purchaser made something like twenty thousand out of it, and, concludes Glover, "it is only fair to say that when I wrote for the extra ten shillings it was paid without a murmur"—under modern conditions there would have been at least two noughts to follow that ten.

Another feature in the modern author contract is

that after a certain term his play, with the rights in it, returns to him, manifestly a most fair arrangement, and one which prevents the locking up of the author's property, which may occur from some totally unforseen cause.

I myself snffered from want of knowledge of this point when surrendering, for a very modest percentage, the entire rights of a musical play which I had adapted; it was quite a success, has been once reproduced, with equal success, in spite of adverse circumstances, and yet is lost to me for ever unless an opportunity, totally unlooked for by me, arises for a further production by the same manager.

One great difficulty with which authors have to contend is in writing a play for a certain cast or, possibly, one or two certain performers, this difficulty being intensified in the case of a play written for an actor-manager.

I once dramatised a very well-known novel for an equally well-known man of this position, and on reading the play to him was more than pleased when he remarked, "That is one of the best plays I've heard for a long time," but my satisfaction was short lived, for he went on to say, "*but*—there are too many good parts in it for it to suit me—it is an absolute necessity that the part I play should stand out in importance above all the rest"; naturally this line of argument did not appeal to me, but assuming him to be the best judge of his own interests I felt that discussion was useless, and the manuscript joined the others on my shelf of "waiting in hopes."

One of the most painful sensations which an author can inflict upon himself may be found in the re-perusal of some play which he has taken down from the aforesaid shelf, under the impression that it would be "just the thing" for So-and-so, who has perhaps communicated the want of a play; the film of dust on the cover (he is a tidy man and it is but a film) is removed, and he sits down to read it with anticipatory enjoyment. More often than not he gets no further than the first act before finding out that the six months or so which have elapsed since its completion have covered the film of dust with an accumulation of rust which makes every situation and speech creak with antiquity; his only consolation being the rare fortune of finding the germ idea still good, and worth the expenditure of fresh hours of hard work.

Dramatic authors suffer far less than those who write the libretti for musical pieces from the alterations and eliminations to which their plays are subjected, and very necessarily so, at the earlier rehearsals. So many pages of dialogue require so much time to deliver, and the length can be fairly easily determined before coming to the stage at all, but when the musical numbers have to be reckoned with, not to speak of time allowed for the inevitable encores, the time-sheet is thrown very much out of balance, and I have known it necessary, even as late as the dress rehearsal, to cut out solid blocks of the play, which, unless done by a practised hand, is apt to render the whole somewhat disjointed.

The fatigue of these lengthy rehearsals is enormous,

and I have constantly known them to last from eleven o'clock until five-thirty, with an interval for lunch.

In one play we were producing at Daly's some years since we had a remarkable sequence of these long days, owing to what was perhaps a somewhat unusual vagueness in the method of the author, and as they threatened to become a serious item of expense to the choristers, George Edwardes, with his invariable thoughtfulness for all concerned in his productions, commissioned a certain caterer to supply tea and beef sandwiches and cake for the sustenance of the hard-working members of the chorus. Needless to say that this kind action was fully appreciated by all, except perhaps one man who fancied he saw in it a possibility of getting even further concessions from the management in shape of payment for rehearsals, and, with this object in view, proposed that they should all sign a letter of thanks to Edwardes; this was received with acclamation, and the letter written, whereupon he suggested an addition in the shape of a request for payment; this being as peremptorily negatived as the other had been approved he remarked: "Well, we might write it and *scratch it out!*"

Naturally none but the merest tyro actually enjoys rehearsing, and in the case of a play which is running well and, in consequence of illness or absence from some other cause of one or two members of the cast, needs constant attendance at the theatre for the sake of those taking their places, is much more of a weariness than the original affair. We have been

curiously unfortunate in this respect with *The Girl in the Train*, having had few entire weeks without a call of some sort.

Speaking about this on one occasion brought me a recompense in the form of an interesting reminiscence on the part of my old friend Colonel McCalmont, to whom I was unburdening myself of the grievance. It seems that many years ago he played Sir Joseph Porter in *Pinafore* with some amateurs in Belfast, and made such a hit in the part that D'Oyly Carte gave him permission to appear in the part with the Repertoire Company whenever it found itself in the town, and he cared to do so. He told me that on several occasions he did so, and only relinquished the pleasure on finding out the distaste the company evinced for attending rehearsals of a play which they had been appearing in for years. As a reward for their forbearance he took advantage of his last appearance chancing to be made on the eve of the wedding of one of the ladies of the company to invite them all to dinner, and a very joyous gathering resulted, the Dick Deadeye of the company, my old friend Billington, afterwards declaring that from the time of demolition of the lobster salad he had no further recollection of how the evening was spent, except that he did make up for the part. The colonel gave the bride away at the ceremony on the following day, and used his authority as *loco parentis* to soothe the anger of a christening party which insisted on a prior claim on the church and failed to appreciate the very natural impatience of the

STAGE-MANAGING THE BIRDS IN MY GARDEN

bride and bridegroom, whose occupation necessitated an appearance the same evening in *Iolanthe.*

At one of our lengthy rehearsals at the Savoy, when the company was also playing at night, I remember we were all getting very tired, and Gilbert perhaps a little irritated at the inevitable slackness, when suddenly one of the ladies of the chorus stepped forward and said, "I want to go home." Gilbert, ready as usual, replied, "Well, we all want to go home—what's the matter?" The lady announced that she must go, as she had been very much annoyed by one of the gentleman choristers putting his arm round her waist and calling her "a pretty dear," but she was immediately mollified, and resumed her place, on Gilbert assuring her very seriously that "he couldn't have meant it!"

Most actors are blessed with a sense of humour, which is undoubtedly fostered by the nature of their calling, and it is indeed fortunate that this should be so for the workers in a profession so full of vicissitudes and trials of all kinds; the actor is almost always optimistic and that good engagement which is to bring fame and wealth is always in the immediate future, even after weary months of waiting, and as a rule he bears his reverses with a jauntiness born of the brave heart he carries. The much-discussed question of "Sketches" must frequently bring an anxious thought to the minds of many to whom "the Halls" have been a boon not fully appreciated perhaps by those in regular work. Surely there is room for all: the sketch players do not oust the

single-turn artists, and many a manager has discovered in a sketch the very person he has been vainly seeking to fill some position in a forthcoming production; neither managers nor actors can spend all their time on the steps of the agent's office, and a short visit to a music hall may often result in profit as well as amusement.

That there should be a time limit is, I think, reasonable, both in fairness to the regular theatres and in defence of the single-turn artist, who might be in danger of being crowded out, though this danger, owing to the cosmopolitan taste of music-hall audiences is reduced to a minimum.

The sense of humour is naturally not always in evidence, a proof of which was furnished to me the other day in the telling of a story by Huntley Wright to myself and another actor, who shall be nameless. Two brother play-actors had foregathered in a hotel bar in Manchester and one remarked, "Dear old chap—haven't seen you for years—where are you now?" "Oh, I'm out with *Wicked Women* and this week, dear boy, we're regularly 'off the map,' a place called 'Ince'—sort of suburb of Wigan—but next week, thank goodness! we get back to civilisation." "Oh—where are you next week?" "'Delf,' old boy." "Ah!" Both Wright and myself thoroughly enjoyed this, but the third never even smiled and then said: "I never heard of either of those places."

I heard from the same source two stories concerning theatrical landladies which strongly appealed

to me, having lately had an experience of some of the weird specimens of this product; needless to say that both the ladies were provincial and of quite an ordinary type.

The first related to Christmas Day. Huntley Wright having, of course, a night off, and wishing to take advantage of it by giving a little dinner and card party, had done all his shopping and rang for his landlady after breakfast, to give final instructions. She appeared, with red eyes, a most woebegone expression, and clad in deep mourning which had seen much wear; having taken his courage in both hands he started on his instructions, to be met at once with the statement: "You can't 'ave no dinner in this 'ouse to-day." Fearing some terrible bereavement, the would-be host inquired the reason. "Well, sir," was the reply, "you see this is 'ow it is. I lost my dear 'usband on Chrismiss Day ten years ago." "Ten years!" shouted Wright. "Well, but——" "Wait a moment," sniffed the mourner—"every year since then I've took a day's 'oliday—which I spends *sittin' on 'is tombstone*!" There was no dinner.

The other case was that of a very sympathetic old Lancashire landlady, and the occasion was the catching of a chill which necessitated lying in bed for a day or so; she was one of that type of women who has inevitably suffered from the same complaint as the patient to whom she may be talking, but always in a much more virulent form, or, if that course appears inconvenient, has had a friend or relation who was "never free from it."

On this occasion the patient was suffering, as I said before, from a chill on the liver, and it is a very odd thing about this type of lady that although she will discuss, with appalling frankness, the state of her internal mechanism there is one exception she makes, and that is the liver, no lady being supposed to possess such a thing; it was therefore her husband who was used in the following species of monologue: —"Chill on the liver?—ah—and well I remember my 'usband with it—'e 'ad jest your 'igh colour—couldn't fancy anything but a little rum and milk—I suppose you——No?—ah, you've gone past it—jest like 'e did, poor fellow—an' that's jest 'ow 'e used to swear at me too—lor'—you *are* like 'im—died in that very bed 'e did, where you're a-lyin'——" Hasty exit to avoid a carefully aimed golf-boot.

Whatever their faults, however, they are a kind-hearted race, and prone to great disappointment if the appetite of their tenant proves unequal to the lavish supply they make when left to their own devices, although in some cases there is this method in their madness: that much will be "left over" which will never be asked for again. That this is not always so was proved to me by my landlady once in Manchester, when I was dining out on the Sunday; just as I was getting into the cab she waddled up and thrust a very sticky parcel into my hand with the remark: "In case they don't give ye enough!" The packet contained some half-dozen sandwiches, and a cake of home-made toffee which was rapidly melting all over the bread.

CHAPTER XVIII

"THE CHOCOLATE SOLDIER"—"BARON TRENCK"

THE shortsighted policy of looking too far ahead has often, in theatrical matters at least, brought in its train a series of complications, not to say disasters, which might have been avoided by adopting the more obvious one of leaving well alone, the great difficulty being of course to decide when it is "well," this difficulty being increased by the extraordinary unanimity of the diametrically opposite opinions offered by "those who should know," on each and every play that has ever been submitted to the public.

The divergence of individual opinions on a play is really something marvellous; you will find two clubmen discussing, let us say, *The Quaker Girl* and *The Arcadians.* A will tell you that the former is "absolutely the biggest rot I ever saw," and the latter—"the only thing worth going to just now"; while B will give an identical opinion but transpose the plays. It is to be presumed that both are equally sincere in their pronouncements, but it is an interesting problem to solve as to which of them is correct in his summing up, especially when we consider that, it being after all a matter of personal opinions, both may be right.

An odd point about these much-discussed plays—I refer to plays generally, and not in particular to the two I have chosen for purposes of illustration—is that, in spite of a strongly worded contempt for the entertainment, you will find at certain theatres the expressors of these criticisms in constant evidence, and certainly not voicing any dissatisfaction with the fare provided. Of course in some cases this may be accounted for by the lure of the personal friend on the working side of the footlights, but when that attraction does not exist the motive for supporting a decried entertainment is difficult of comprehension.

A periodical statement is made in all journals dealing with theatrical matters to the effect that in musical plays "there is a strongly developing taste on the part of the public for those which present a continuity of plot and action with more than a *soupçon* of serious interest." This statement has, within my recollection, cropped up with studied regularity whenever there has seemed to be a dearth of the "go-as-you-please" form of play, but that there is more than a modicum of truth in the implication is, to my mind, amply demonstrated by the success of plays of *The Chocolate Soldier* type. Here we have a piece which, in regard to the different parts, is more fairly balanced than is the case with the one in which two, or perhaps three, artists are overloaded with material, producing the inevitable shrinkage in the work allotted to other members of the cast, who, given the opportunity, are usually

equally as competent to shine as their more favoured (?) brethren.

The leading soprano, by the exigencies of the plot, carries the larger burden of this work, but even then the proportions are better maintained than usual, with the result of an effective *ensemble* which, in giving each their opportunity, constitutes an entertainment much more acceptable to the general public. Also, in this kind of play there is no possibility allowed to the artist known to the present-day playgoer as "an irresponsible comedian" to embroider his part with words or business absolutely foreign to the matter in hand, and this I believe to be a very great factor in the success of this stamp of play. The really intelligent comedian should surely be capable of importing his personal humour into each and every part he plays without stepping out of the environment of the piece, but it is very rarely the case to find this done, and perhaps the excuse may be urged that a laxity in this matter is met with more approval from the majority of the playgoers than is signified by the minority, who appreciate the more artistic abstention from such methods.

It is difficult to call to mind any musical play wherein the comic men and women have not, at some period of the evening, induced a feeling of regret (not to use a stronger word) at some totally unnecessary interpolation which has severely marred what was otherwise an excellent, and possibly even artistic, performance. Of course, in many cases, these regrettable interpolations are less the fault of the

artists making them than that of the manager who introduces them, equally of course with the best possible motive—namely, that of (in his opinion) brightening up the piece. That this method is not invariably attended with the happiest results is conclusively proved, in my humble opinion, in the case of *The Girl in the Train*. Here we have what was, at the start, a straightforward play, with a plot which was developed in a pleasant and interesting manner, and, without unduly fatiguing the attention, adhered to in the second act, and brought to the inevitable happy conclusion with what one might describe as a praiseworthy consecutiveness which, from its very rarity, seemed to be worth preserving, not only to those concerned in the work, but also to the playgoer with a preference for this type of piece. But what happens? The powers that be come to the conclusion, for reasons naturally not divulged, but presumably not entirely disconnected with the box-office returns, that the introduction of some new feature is imperative to give the play the fillip which seems advisable.

The return to England, after some years' absence, of so popular a public favourite as Miss Connie Ediss apparently synchronised with the object in view, and she was persuaded to take the seat in the train vacated by the former "confidential maid" to the heroine, Mrs Van Buren; everyone knows, admires, and loves (and speaks of her as) Connie Ediss, and in suitable surroundings her humour and breadth of style have again and again proved invaluable, but in this particular instance a strong note of incongruity was struck by

the confidential Dutch servant of a Dutch mistress living in Holland breaking out into a song dealing with famous London and Brighton hotels, and with the refrain of "When I was in the Chorus at the Gaiety."

A sympathetic little scene between the mistress and maid was eliminated entirely, to the disadvantage of the plot, and those of us who had to deal with the story were distinctly conscious of an effort being required to reunite the broken thread.

That the song in question was an undoubted success is an incontrovertible fact, and, in its proper environment, would have made the success of any act in which it fell, but it did not certainly belong to this play, and, as I have tried to show, caused a break in the interest which proved exceedingly difficult to bridge.

It was just about this time that I was "approached" on behalf of Mr Whitney, who was gratifyingly anxious to secure me for his production of *Baron Trenck*, and as I imagined I saw symptoms of the train approaching a terminus I consulted the Superintendent of the Traffic, who very kindly consented to my stepping off when the train slowed down for Holy Week. However, Fate stepped in once more, and a very severe attack of bronchitis necessitated my removal to a nursing-home some ten days earlier, and although I was anxious to reappear for a few nights, at least, on recovering, George Edwardes thought it inadvisable to make any further change, in which he was doubtless correct, but I felt some

natural disappointment at having played my part for the last time without being aware of it.

I was thus free to commence rehearsals of *Baron Trenck*, this being my first engagement with a manager owing allegiance to the Stars and Stripes.

Mr Whitney is the fortunate possessor of a personality so genial as to make him a *persona grata* with all who come in contact with him, and with this trait he combines an optimism which is positively exhilarating, and although the first-night reception of *Baron Trenck* was not altogether favourable, even though enthusiastic at moments, it entirely failed to shake his faith in the ultimate success of the opera, a faith which I admit I share, for where there is so much to enjoy and admire it only needs the elimination of the dull portions, and the general "pulling-together" which, at the time of writing this, the opera is undergoing, to establish its success, and, incidentally, dissipate the reputation for ill luck which in some odd way the theatre has acquired.

An initial error was made in describing it as a "comic opera," which it certainly is not, the term which would have fitted it more nearly being, in my estimation, "light opera," which is a distinction with a great difference, the predominance given by the author to the love interest completely overshadowing the "comic relief." This combination arises, as I gathered from the original adaptor of the German book, from two causes, firstly, the attraction possessed by these lengthy duets in dramatic style for the German audiences, and secondly to the uproarious

mirth aroused in the same audiences by humour which, to the differently constituted English mind, appears to be not only feeble to a degree but of so hoary an antiquity as to be unworthy of disinterment.

Whether the faith I have alluded to is to be justified or not, remains to be seen, but the comedians entrusted with the lighter side of the work have plenty of straw to hand for the making of their proverbial bricks, the first act being most fortuitously laid in a farmyard, the cheerful aspect of which is somewhat discounted by an overwhelming tree of a totally unknown type, presumably of Slavonian origin, but not, it is fervently to be hoped, the Slavonian Upas.

The American method of rehearsing naturally interested me much, as a novel experience, the play having an American "producer," who was described to me as a "hustler" of pronounced ability, and in whom Mr Whitney had every confidence; I found him a genial, capable man, with a very keen sense of humour, which stood him in good stead in dealing with our insular idiosyncrasies, but the marvellous smoothness of the Savoy rehearsals of the olden days, conducted entirely by Gilbert, have perhaps made me slightly hypercritical on the subject of time-wasting, a feeling which has not been wholly eradicated by the many subsequent years of trial in connection with musical comedies, so many scenes in which are absolutely and literally written at rehearsal, but with regard to this production there was only one serious cause of delay, arising from the "producer's"

conception of one of the two most prominent characters differing in a most marked manner from that of Mr Whitney, who, being unable to attend the earlier rehearsals, found himself in the position of having to "undo and remake"—at a very considerable expenditure of time and patience on the part of all concerned; the only drawback to this *bouleversement* of a reading of character is the appearance, at odd moments, of certain remnants of the earlier teaching, thereby producing a complexity of character not perhaps intended by the author.

The success of an opera or musical comedy, but more especially the former, must of necessity depend on the clearness with which the plot or story (if any exist) reaches the intelligence of the audience, and the fact should never be lost sight of that the audience has assembled to be amused and will almost involuntarily resent a strain upon its attention sufficient to warrant the query "What is it all about?"

If this fact were more generally recognised, authors would grasp the inadvisability of telling such plot or story in the form of lyrics, instead of a few concise speeches which would furnish all the needful explanation, while the lyrics could be left to the tender mercies of the artists dealing with them.

To tell the story in lyrics necessitates not only a Gilbert to write them, but artists possessed of an enunciation in the delivery which is unfortunately very rare, I was about to write "nowadays," but on retrospection I have come to the conclusion that

singers of the present day are at least no worse than their forerunners, and some of them even better, but the chief offenders in this matter of indistinct delivery are undoubtedly those who attach undue importance to "voice production," and the blame for this, I fancy, rests less on their shoulders than on those of their instructors, who probably adopt what is known as "the Italian method."

I have before now alluded to the difficulty, within my own experience, of writing singable lyrics to music already composed, a difficulty largely increased in the case of rendering into English, lyrics which have been set by a foreign composer in a foreign tongue, but the difficulty is by no means insurmountable, though it calls imperatively for two qualifications in the attack—namely, a knowledge of music and a keen perception in the matter of emphasis.

One journal, in dealing with the production of *Baron Trenck*, made use of the headline, "Volupük Opera at the Whitney Theatre," which was perhaps a slight overstrain in the effort to display originality on the part of the critic of the paper in question, but, while deprecating the wilful exaggeration of the term, it is perhaps, from another point of view, entitled to some commendation, as indicating a tendency on the part of, at least, one of a highly influential body of men to write of things as he finds them, a proceeding which is less honoured in the breach than the observance, and also one which offers the delightful possibility of his being able to refer, on a second visit to the play, to the improve-

ment consequent upon the attention paid to his reprimand.

Mr Desmond Coke writes an interesting article on the subject of critics, in *The Daily Mail*, in which he compares the American and English critic, rather to the advantage of the former, whom he describes as "fearless," but he undoubtedly weakens his case in saying that "it is surely more exhilarating than the usual" to read such criticisms as that delivered by a Chicago journal on Miss Blank's voice, which he compares to that of "a rheumatic corncrake," but he re-establishes it perhaps at the close of the article where he proffers the following advice to the critic:—

"As complement to tactful praise must go some truthful blame."

To which I will venture to add a line of my own:

"A combination only found in him who plays the game."

CHAPTER XIX

GERMAN INVASION—"THE GIRL IN THE TRAIN"—WALTZES—FOREIGN COMPETITION

On my return to town I combined for a short time the pleasure of playing nightly at the Tivoli with the stress of rehearsals for the anglicised version of *Die Geschiedene Frau*, and within a week or so I realised that the long-threatened German invasion was an accomplished fact.

The presence of Victor Leon, the author, Leo Fall, the composer, their interpreters, agents and personal suites, and later on Herr Kapellmeister Stier who was to be the conductor, imparted quite an international character to the proceedings, and, largely owing to their inability to speak English and ours to speak German, led to complications which occasionally had their amusing side, but which of necessity made for an appalling waste of time in rehearsing numbers and effects which were destined to ultimate elimination.

The Czar of all the Russias is scarcely more autocratic than is George Edwardes in the matter of the plays he produces, but, however much one may deprecate the omission of some pet bit of music or scene, the result is almost invariably a confirmation of his judgment, and whatever may have been ex-

cised is rarely reintroduced though frequently supplemented with something new; as, however, the necessity for these, often radical, alterations can only be discovered at rehearsal, it follows naturally that a considerable amount of time is cut to waste in rehearsing material eventually to be pronounced unsuitable, thus producing a weariness of the flesh in the poor artist who only appears in the second act and may attend for a week without even speaking.

The fact of no one being put forward as the author of the English version of the play considerably added to the atmosphere of doubt as to whom one should apply for advice on certain points or instruction as to method of procedure, and even when, eventually, a well-known author made a short series of appearances, of a somewhat tentative description, the presence of George Edwardes at the same time induced a certain hesitation in saddling his shoulders with the burden of guilt.

I look upon the piece as a kind of reversion to the old style of entertainment of a comedy with music, or, to give it its condensed title, a vaudeville; the first act, with its very occasional numbers, certainly bears out my argument, which would be sustained in Act II. but for one number which differs from the rest as not being evolved entirely out of "the situation." While there are many who find great pleasure in this form of piece there are undoubtedly just as many who prefer the irresponsibilities of musical comedy, and it has amused me to find opinions so much at variance as to, on one hand,

condemn the second act for a faulty elucidation of the story, and on the other to recommend an entire abstention from the first!

The manager who has the *savoir faire* so to manipulate his entertainment as to retain the patronage of a *clientèle* of such diverse requirements is evidently possessed of an insight little less than miraculous.

The strong resemblance of the first act to Gilbert and Sullivan's *Trial by Jury* was undoubtedly the cause of my being engaged for the part of the President of the Divorce Court, and on my first interview with George Edwardes he only considered it necessary to read me that act to give me sufficient inducement to play the part—the fact that at this time the second act was not written, or rather adapted, not affecting the matter—in which supposition he was quite correct.

I travelled up from Hull, where we were finishing the tour of *The Walls of Jericho*, to attend my first musical rehearsal, and was rather surprised to find that the Judge's music was inclined to be conspicuous by its absence, in fact I travelled all those miles and back again to rehearse one concerted number, my share of which was limited to certain interjections such as "Who did?" "Who was?" etc., and even these were spoken, and not sung—but I mention this in no spirit of complaint, it being one of those little trials which are almost unavoidable during the early rehearsals of a new piece.

Huntley Wright had meanwhile been hard at

work learning the music of the part of Van Tromp, the father of the heroine, and it was not until my reappearance at rehearsal a week later that I was met with the proposition to exchange parts with him, considerably to my disappointment.

Although there can be no question, I hope, that the President of the Court would have been as safe in my hands as in his, I can readily enter into the desire of a comedian to shine in two acts in preference to one, and I was able to appreciate the humour of the solution of the change as offered to me—namely, that the author required a younger man in the part, this reason being I fancy ascribable to a faulty translation of some wish expressed in German, as the two are alluded to in the play as contemporaries.

There was a duet for the two men in Act II. which threatened to partake of the character of a topical number, but on consideration it was thought wiser to avoid such a procedure, for the main reason that while it is comparatively easy for a solo singer to write and sing verses practically on a moment's notice, it is manifestly unfair to expect the same readiness of his partner in a duet.

In the endeavour to get away if possible from the beaten track I had George Edwardes' permission to approach the composer with any idea that might occur to me, which I did, but the difficulties proved absolutely insurmountable.

Having evolved the idea of "Memories," I interviewed author, composer, interpreter and suite, also making a gallant if ineffectual attempt to present my

HUNTLEY WRIGHT

wishes in their own vernacular, and was received with a consideration and urbanity perfectly charming, but, owing to the departure of the composer for his native land, the time only allowed him to write an air before receiving the lyric, an inversion of the recognised method of procedure, and attended, in this instance, with the unsatisfactory result of a tune more resembling in character the Dead March than anything else, and therefore not affording the requisite inspiration for the verses.

I was more fortunate in dealing with a song for Evett, written also by Herr Fall at the last moment, and which lent itself very easily to treatment as a love lyric, the mode of progression being chosen as being shorter than the alternative, which was, firstly to write a lyric, secondly have it translated into German, thirdly composed, and fourthly retranslated into English; but after all this song has not been used, up to the present.

No one who has not tried it can have any conception of the difficulty of setting words to music already written; to maintain the sense is of course easy enough, but to give grace to the metre and rhyme is a difficult task.

In the days of old adaptations of French light operas, such as *Olivette*, *Mascotte* and the like, the principle of keeping the sense only was followed, with the result that some of the so-called lyrics are appalling in their baldness, but people have grown more exigeant with time, and it is not unusual nowadays to find a supposedly brainless patron of the stalls

offering the criticism: "I like the tune, but the words are rotten!" thereby displaying a more delicate sense of art than grammar.

Everyone is aware that to criticise in any way a case which is *sub judice* is a grave breach of etiquette, if not something worse, and, as the run of a play may be taken as placing it in the position of *sub judice* I do not propose to analyse its chances of a lengthy run; the first-night criticism is of a different nature, in that the merits of the play, *per se*, are set forth much as a merchant, who must announce certain goods for sale, brings them to the notice of his patrons. That the initial success of *The Girl in the Train* was very marked is an undeniable fact, and only the future can decide whether the customary procedure of dropping in new numbers and scenes will prove as acceptable in a vaudeville as in that frankly confessed hotch-potch known as a musical comedy.

This method most certainly did not obtain in the cases of the light operas to which I have alluded, their popularity and duration of attraction being entirely maintained by the work as originally presented. I am not aware who was the originator of this scheme of "second editions," but it can hardly have been the author, who is in some cases called upon for sufficient material to supply the nucleus of at least two pieces, although, presumably, at a commensurate increase in fees.

It is a somewhat sorrowful reflection that our chief London manager should be compelled to seek successes in the foreign manufactories, but the fact

remains that *The Merry Widow*, *The Dollar Princess*, *The Girl in the Train* and, if report speaks truly, *The Count of Luxembourg* have done more than anything else to remove the stigma which has hitherto attached to everything "made in Germany."

I have heard the explanation put forward that the Germans have very carefully studied our *modus operandi* in light opera, extracted therefrom all the best points and applied them to their own scheme (with the additional advantage they seem to possess of plot-finders) for years past, with the happy results exemplified in the pieces I have mentioned; but there is more in it than this, and I fear it is an incontrovertible fact that they are ahead of us in the matter of abundance of composers.

Still, waltzes are not the be-all and end-all of music, though there is no denying their attractiveness, as there is equally no denying the German pre-eminence of composition, as far as they are concerned—if, indeed, one might not almost say, in connection with musical plays, only as far as they are concerned—and a piece in which the numbers consist of a succession of waltzes is apt to become a trifle boring, all of which fosters the hope that, under more fortuitous circumstances, our native composers may once again dominate the market and introduce a few bars' rest into the seemingly interminable melodious jingle of English gold trickling into foreign pockets in the shape of fees.

The more fortuitous circumstances are to be found, I would venture to suggest, in some new author, or authors, who would supply pieces of the type of *The*

Arcadians or, to go back a little, *The White Chrysanthemum*, plays which interest the mind without fatiguing it, as well as please the eye and ear, and with these pieces forthcoming, composers like Leslie Stuart, Howard Talbot and some two or three more would be found equal to the occasion.

The duet "Memories," to which I have already referred, although a fairly pronounced success on the first night, did not altogether satisfy George Edwardes' ideas of what was wanted, not perhaps entirely for the situation but also for the general brightness of the play, it being, as its name implies, more a medium for artistic and subdued effects and not containing the elements of bustle and movement which he considered desirable. After some ten weeks, therefore, and as the result of much cogitation on the part of Huntley Wright and myself, I wrote an entirely new number, which dealt with dancing "ancient and modern," with dialogue between the verses; the assistance of Doctor Hugo Felix was secured and the happy result arrived at of a duet which satisfied the powers that be and certainly appears to appeal more strongly to our audiences than did the former and more reposeful one. I have not seen this number, and possibly may never do so, but I have a slight feeling of regret at the loss of its predecessor, together with the hope that I may not be alone in my point of view. The number of nails which the coffin of "the artistic" seems capable of receiving without being entirely destroyed is truly marvellous, but, on the other hand, it is a very difficult matter to decide to what extent the

AS LUCAS VAN TROMP IN "THE GIRL IN THE TRAIN"

standard of art may be frayed without becoming torn out of all semblance.

In this connection it is somewhat instructive to read a criticism in *Munsey's Magazine*, wherein the writer attacks our actors and audiences as follows:—"Apropos of the foolery that seems to elicit mirth in an English theatre, the musical comedy just now prevalent in London furnishes striking examples. It is as if the usually staid Britisher, once he makes up his mind to go to the play for amusement's sake, leaves all his ordinary standards of common-sense outside the theatre, and is prepared to laugh at any and every sort of nonsense that the comedians may please to offer him." This rather sweeping condemnation is probably to some extent deserved, but is qualified in the same article by an allusion to *The Girl in the Train* as follows:—"Its success was instantaneous, and this time on sheer merit of piece and presentation alone, for there is practically no interpolated horseplay."

This seems to indicate that, given the material, we can and do maintain our standard of art, so that it all comes back to the difficulty of finding the material, of which no American importation, as far as my memory serves me, has proved exceptionally remarkable for durability or artistry of texture.

Although the word "horseplay" is somewhat inapplicable to the situation, the difference between the two duets I have written for Huntley Wright and myself is almost sufficiently strongly marked to warrant its use, and it has proved no small consolation to me to have met many who preferred the more

quiet humour of "Memories," both in words and business, to the necessarily extravagant burlesque of *The Merry Widow* waltz, but, as there is no room for doubt as to the latter effort meeting with a far larger meed of applause and laughter than the former, there is presumably an end to all argument as to which is the better.

The pathetic little song which Clara Evelyn sang at the piano, and of which I was also the guilty author, shared the same fate as the first duet, and was replaced by an effort at mingling humour with pathos (also mine) of which I felt by no means proud, but which invariably secures an encore—yet another proof of the sagacity of George Edwardes in the knowledge of "what the public wants," but this desirable result was not achieved until after a second song of a sentimental character, with a waltz refrain, had been given a fair trial.

I cannot help thinking that there are indications that the waltz numbers, of which at the present time there would seem to be somewhat of a plethora, are gradually losing their undoubted attraction in consequence of the over-supply.

The rise of the waltz, especially the Fall waltz—in which remark there seems to lurk a musical joke—has been most remarkable, but the English is hardly such a waltz-loving nature as is the German, and there are not wanting signs of a desire to hear love and passion sung of in a different metre, possibly a less sensuous one.

Owing to the success of our "dancing" duet, the

quartet which followed it was somewhat discounted and the places of the two numbers were changed in consequence; this reminded me of one of my olden-time topical songs, which proved so "popular" as to upset most that succeeded it, and George Edwardes asked me if I would mind it coming almost at the end of the play; I suggested that I should sing it after the final curtain, but the idea did not appeal to him, and it was left undisturbed.

In spite of many vicissitudes, in the form of absence from the cast of many of the principals, either from illness or other causes, we have already celebrated our two hundred and fiftieth performance and the running gear seems to work as if wound up for an indefinite time.

Owing to the absence of Clara Evelyn, through illness, we had a very strenuous day on one particular Wednesday. There were certain alterations to go in, which had been rehearsed, and there was a "call" for the new lady, which occupied us until the time the doors opened for the matinée, and the performance which followed was rather an ordeal, most of us spending our time in the wings in a state of uncertainty as to the new positions of certain scenes and songs, which, added to the nervous feeling of a new artist in one of the parts, eventually provoked a sensation of great satisfaction that all had gone off with no serious contretemps.

At different times I have played with four Presidents, four Gonda Van der Loos, three Karl Van Burens and two Mrs Van Burens, not to speak of

the minor parts, and I hold the enviable record of being the only member of the cast who has played at every performance, but even these drastic changes do not seem to have injured the vitality of the play.

Being a trifle envious of Huntley Wright's second-act costume of knee breeches I requested permission to array myself in ordinary evening dress, so as to secure some sort of distinctiveness; this was readily accorded to me, and proved so effective that the other men were very shortly clothed in the same manner, which leaves me where I was, and necessitates further thought.

The costume in which one appears has, I fancy, very much more to do with the success with which one meets, both from an acting and personal point of view, than is generally recognised, and influences to an appreciable extent the pleasure with which we watch our favourite performers.

For instance, the late Henry Neville, who did a large amount of fine work in his time, was essentially a "costume actor"; his Charles Surface was a long way the best within my recollection and was even an outstanding feature of a cast which included the late William Farren, a splendid Sir Peter, and John Clayton, equally good as Joseph Surface, but hamper Neville with modern dress and you destroyed a large part of his delightful distinction; with the costume went the gallant bearing belonging to it. To come to more modern examples, everyone knows and appreciates the charm of Charles Hawtrey in present-day clothing, and I would venture to assert

that many of those who saw him in *The Noble Spaniard* felt a lack of something, the nature of which they were possibly unable to define, the fact being that it was "dear old Charlie," but hampered by a peculiar rig.

Then again, my young friend Harry Irving, whose portrait in *negligé* lends a characteristic thoughtful attention to the page he faces—as Hawtrey studiously regards his—is another case in point. The first occasion on which I saw him play was in *The House Opposite*, and in which he gave a masterly and refreshing rendition of a difficult part, in modern dress, and, having some curiosity to see whether costume was, to him, an aid or the reverse, I welcomed the opportunity of seeing him in *Princess Clementine*, when I found that, with the exception of some beautifully delivered love speeches, which would certainly have seemed incongruous if associated with frock-coat and trousers, he afforded me less pleasure than in the other play. Costume again.

Wyndham is undoubtedly one of the few men to whom no kind of costume comes amiss; *Davy Garrick* or *The Candidate*—as wide apart as the poles—make no shade of difference to his performance, or the pleasure with which we witness it, the manner of each being assumed with the dress of each, a fortuitous talent to possess.

These examples could of course be multiplied *ad infinitum*, but are perhaps sufficient to support my theory of the influence exerted on the actor by "costume."

The art of pitching the voice to suit the size of the theatre in which one is playing is only to be acquired by experience, by which I mean that it is only the experienced artist who can tell *at once*, in a strange theatre, what power of voice is necessary. Some have occasionally sent someone to the back of the gallery to report on the subject, not always with happy results, as I remember in the case of a lady at Daly's who had one line in the first act which ran, "Can anyone lend me a cow?" (It was a farmyard scene.) She sent her maid to listen, and on her return was told: "Yes, miss; I heard every word. You said: 'Can anyone lend me a *pound*?'"

The stage-hands are noted as a rule for a certain dry humour, of which the following is a fairly good example. There was a musical comedy billed at a theatre being run by a species of mushroom management, and the announcements ran: "Book by Sir A. B. Lyrics by Sir C. D. Music composed by Sir E. F." Two of the men were reading it out and one remarked: "Bill, we're gettin' aristocratic, ain't us? Three knights!" To which Bill replied: "Yus; that's about wot I give it!"

A book must have an ending, however much one may want to say more, but there is an always present danger of proving wearisome whatever the entertainment provided, a striking illustration of which was furnished me the other evening. I arrived at the Vaudeville for work at my usual time, and as I discharged my taxi it was engaged by a disappointed-looking gentleman of a kind of provincial exterior

H. B. IRVING

appearance, who had come out of the house as I drove up. He looked at me sternly as he saw me enter the theatre and said loudly to the driver: "Empire! Quick!" His exit was as abrupt as mine.

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